



NEW YEAR HONOUR RECOGNITION FOR LOTS OF HARD WORK



Camilla Phillips MBE, centre, with Hope Centre colleagues

SPORT stars and community heroes from across Dudley borough were recognised in the Queen's New Year's Honours List.

Pamela Preston, of Dudley, aged 66, has been awarded a British Empire Medal for her services to The Samaritans over the past nine years.

Mrs Preston, who is also the deputy regional director for Samaritans, said: "I would like to accept this on behalf of all the volunteers and the work they do."

Halesowen cycling star Helen Scott has been honoured with an MBE for her success in Rio and services to cycling.

The 26-year-old stormed to victory in the B 1,000 metres time trial along with partner Sophie Thornhill. The pair set a Paralympic record time to take GB's sixth gold of the Games.

Camilla Phillips from Halesowen has been awarded an MBE for services to the community through The Hope Centre in Halesowen. She has dedicated herself to helping the residents of Halesowen, in particular the Highfields estate.

Following the closure of the Lighthouse project the 56-year-old was working on in 2009, she decided to volunteer full-time to keep the service going for the community, using the former Lighthouse building to form the Hope Centre in Andrew Road.

She said: "I was really shocked when I first found out - I thought someone was playing a joke on me. It's a huge honour."

"I may be the one receiving the award but it's really a team effort."

Dr David Hegarty, chairman of Dudley Clinical Commissioning Group has been awarded an MBE for services to primary care.

Dr Hegarty, also a partner at Wychbury Medical Practice in Stourbridge, said: "I believe this honour is attributable to the many committed people who I have had the pleasure of working with over the last 26 years."

Ian Powell, of Sedgley, former chairman of accountants PricewaterhouseCoopers has been made a Knights Batchelor. He joined the firm in 1977 straight from Wolverhampton Polytechnic. He led PwC through the financial crisis and helped it expand.

HOSPITAL Record numbers flocking to A&E

MORE than 600 patients have been attending the accident and emergency department at Russells Hall Hospital every day over the Christmas and New Year period.

The number arriving by ambulance is up 10 per cent on the same period a year ago.

The 'unprecedented' demand has heaped pressure on staff and left the hospital struggling to cope. Bosses are braced for an even busier time ahead as temperatures plummet.

The surge has prompted a desperate plea for people to only go to the hospital if they have a serious condition. It has also led to increased waiting times in A&E, with the hospital's four-hour performance, the national NHS target, taking a hit.

RETAIL Sainsbury's checks out of Merry Hill

AFTER serving customers for more than 27 years, Sainsbury's at Merry Hill has shut its doors for the final time, with nearly 200 staff losing their jobs.

The tills are ringing no more and many of the shelves were stripped bare on the final day, Thursday, as customers and staff spoke of their sadness.

Sainsbury's decision to pull out of the shopping centre, where it has had a presence since October 1989, was blamed on the store 'underperforming'. It resulted in the loss of 193 jobs.

CRIME Two shotguns stolen during raid on home

POLICE are appealing for information after two shotguns were stolen from a home in Stourbridge.

Burglars forced their way through the rear of a house on Wassell Road and a gun cabinet was forced open and the shotguns taken sometime between 2pm December 27 and 11am the following day.

Detective Constable Caroline Morris said: "I would like to reassure the public we have a dedicated team of officers working on this investigation."

The firearms were a Sabel 12-bore and a Beretta Silver Pigeon shotgun. Anyone with information should contact DC Morris.

INSIDE GLASSBOYS' CUP FEVER



Worship ends at landmark building after 150 years CHURCH HOLDS FINAL SERVICE

THEY came to share memories and worship for the final time at the church which has meant so much to them.

Packed into the entrance hall at the back of St John's United Reformed Church in Stourbridge were around 40 people, the congregation for its final Sunday service on New Year's Day.

With just eight regular attendees and a growing list of repairs needed on the Grade-II listed building, the decision was somewhat inevitable, but no less upsetting.

Lay preacher Jon Syed conducted the final service which included carefully selected readings that reflected on the bringing to a close more than 150 years of worship at the church.

After reading Psalm 84, Longing for God's House, he told the congregation: "There is a saying that God's house is not everything but what is important is the nearness to God. That is what is important. We lose a building but God is always with us. That is the important bit."

Among those who attended the service were mother and daughter Marion Wass and Pat Sinclair. Both were married at St John's - in 1951 and 1973 respectively - and Marion was for a time church organist during the 1950s.

Youth

Marion, aged 87, of Stourbridge, said: "Back then (the 1950s) we lived for the church. It was the heart of the community and there was a big congregation at that time."

"Everything went on here, all the clubs. My brother and I ran a youth club from the hut out the back of the church and it was wonderful."

In recent years St John's, near the Stourbridge ring road, has continued to play a key role in the community.

Black Country Radio was based there until it recently moved to Brierley Hill and the Black Country Foodbank also calls the

Report by Rob Cox

church home. Rainbows and Guides meet weekly at the building.

Mr Syed, aged 76, of Amblecote, said: "The main problem we have had is people getting older and passing away. That has really reduced our numbers. It is those churches which have young people which flourish."

The church, built in 1860, has in recent times only had a regular congregation of around eight people.

The building needs repairs and the final blow came when it was rejected in a bid for £100,000 Government funding to carry out those essential repairs.

Mr Syed added: "Over the years, numbers have been slowly decreasing and we've had a very big building to look after which has a hole in the roof."

"As for the future of the building I don't think we will get the point where it is boarded-up and left."

"There are people doing their level best to create a community hub here. That is what I would like to see now."



Church secretary Jon Syed leads the final service at St John's United Reformed Church in Stourbridge

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Addict threatened to Taser his mother

A DRUG addict who threatened to Taser his mother is starting a five-year prison sentence.

Richard Swift trashed his mother Gillian's home in Cobham Road, Halesowen.

The 25-year-old defendant ripped a bag containing his car keys from her with such force that she was left with a two-inch friction burn across her chest, Wolverhampton Crown Court heard.

Police arriving at the scene in Halesowen had to swerve to avoid a crash Swift sped away from the cul-de-sac. But his escape was halted when a tyre on his vehicle was burst by a police stinger laid in the vehicle's path by officers.

Prosecutor Walter Bealby said there had been

an argument between mother and son in which Richard Swift had threatened her with the electro-shock stun weapon, which was disguised as a torch. "He said 'Don't make me Taser you,'" said Mr Bealby.

At the time of the incident on May 16, 2015, the defendant was spending £40-a-day on cannabis and up to £300-a-week on cocaine.

He had been in possession of the Taser weapon for some time. He later said it was for personal protection in case he fell into debt to a violent drug dealer.

Police confirmed it was a working stun weapon. Mr Simon Rippon, defending, told the court that

his client had made a grave mistake and Richard Swift had described his mother 'as the most important person in his life'.

"He is a young man with a good work record who is loved, but has made a grave mistake at a time of serious personal upset. The circumstances were regrettable," said Mr Rippon.

"He was suffering from a depressive illness for which his use of illicit drugs was wholly inappropriate."

Swift's mother urged the court not to jail her son. But Richard Swift, of Meadow Lane, Newcastle-under-Lyme, was sent to jail for five years after pleading guilty to possession of a disguised firearm.

Public backing move lifting ball games ban at parks

PEOPLE in Dudley borough have resoundingly backed plans to remove historical restrictions on ball games at four parks.

Dudley Council consulted about ball games at three Ernest Stevens Trust parks - Mary Stevens Park in Stourbridge, Stevens Park in Wollescote and Stevens Park in Quarry Bank.

Also included in the survey was Homer Hill Park in Cradley.

Eighty-eight per cent of those surveyed said lifting the ban would benefit the parks and those who visit them.

Following the consultation, which received almost 900 responses, historical covenants and conditions that technically prohibit ball games in the parks on Sundays and Good Fridays can be lifted.

The consultation also asked people if bowling greens and croquet lawns at the parks should be leased to the clubs or organisations that use them. More than 86 per cent agreed that they should.

The proposal to lease the greens to clubs is expected to save Dudley Council £48,000 a year in maintenance costs.

Councillor Hilary Bills, cabinet member for environmental services, said: "We are pleased that most people agree with our proposals to lift the technical restrictions on ball games as we want to encourage everyone to enjoy being active. We will now report the results to the Ernest Stevens Management Committee and to the Charities Commission in order to discuss the best way to manage these valued green spaces for the benefit of the whole community."

Merry Hill Tiger store 'to close'

A GIFT and gadget shop at the Merry Hill centre is closing down, according to retail bosses.

Danish retailer Tiger, which came to Merry Hill in spring 2014, sells its own branded and designed products which range from kitchen gadgets and homeware to stationery, children's toys and hobby items.

Merry Hill tweeted: "We're disappointed to hear that Tiger is closing down. This is a commercial decision taken by Tiger. We wish their staff well."

A member of staff at Tiger said it would close on Wednesday, January 11, but declined to comment further.

This latest store closure follows the recent shutdowns of both Sainsbury's and BHS at the Brierley Hill mega-mall.

Former scrap yard on sale for £250k

A FORMER scrap yard site between Lye and Quarry Bank has been put on the market for £250,000.

The one acre site, on Saltbrook Road, comprises of a partly surfaced overgrown yard. Dudley-based property experts Sellers are selling it.

Patient sent home too soon is given payout

A GRANDMOTHER received a six-figure payout from the trust which runs Dudley's Russells Hall Hospital after she became seriously ill following discharge.

Margaret Rogers, aged 58, was left unable to talk and with no feeling in her limbs after initially being told she could leave hospital in 2007.

Solicitors taking up her case claim if she had been kept in hospital on antibiotics she would have gone on to make a full recovery.

On her first visit to Russells Hall Mrs Rogers underwent a CT scan and lumbar puncture and was diagnosed with bacterial meningitis. After being given antibiotics, she showed some signs of improvement and was discharged.

But her condition soon deteriorated and she was back in hospital at the start of October when it was discovered she had a brain abscess, her solicitors added.

Mrs Rogers was transferred to the Queen Elizabeth Hospital in Birmingham and underwent brain surgery, but lost the ability to talk, lost feeling in her limbs and suffered regular seizures.

Mobility

In August 2010, she was diagnosed with a tumour in her lower spine which was linked to her earlier issues. Her mobility was affected and her short-term memory was poor.

Mrs Rogers has now received a substantial compensation payout from the Dudley Group of Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust, which has apologised. She will also receive annual payments to support her needs.

Following the settlement, Mrs Rogers said: "No amount of money will ever give me back the life I once had, but this settlement has allowed me and my family to achieve the very best quality of life I can."

Clare Langford, from Higgs and Sons solicitors, said: "It was our case that doctors should never have allowed Mrs Rogers home. Had she remained in hospital, she would have made a complete recovery."

Dr Paul Harrison, acting chief executive at Dudley Group of Hospitals, said: "We would like to express our sincere apologies to Mrs Rogers and her family."

"We can confirm an amicable compensation settlement has now been agreed."

Benefactor boosts hospice appeal



Halesowen businessman Dave Berry took part in the John O'Groats to Land's End fundraising challenge

THE Mary Stevens Hospice has been surprised by an extra £10,000 donation from a benevolent businessman, who embarked upon a year of fundraising.

Dave Berry decided he would collect the money for 'A Year of Celebrations' to simultaneously commemorate his 80th birthday, the 50th anniversary of his company - Berry's Fuelling Technologies - and the 25th anniversary of the Mary Stevens Hospice.

The Halesowen businessman

took part in a John O'Groats to Land's End challenge in August, driving the length of the country and stopping off to collect donations from numerous colleagues and business partners he has worked with since starting his company in 1966.

A devoted fundraiser for the Stourbridge hospice, this latest effort by Dave saw his total collected for the hospice surpass £40,000 and he then decided to make it up to £50,000.

Charlotte Schofield, head of fundraising at the hospice, said: "Dave had already contributed so much to this hospice and our ability to look after people. When he called a meeting with us, we obviously went in already full of gratitude. When he pulled out a cheque for £10,000, we were stunned"

The donation couldn't be better timed, as the hospice has launched its largest ever fundraising campaign, to secure the £3 million to refurbish the day services unit.

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Charges for burials set to increase in borough

THE cost of dying will increase across Dudley from the new year – with burial and cremation charges set to rise by almost 10 per cent.

It will cost £975 to bury an adult – a £72 rise – under the authority's new bereavement charges for 2017. A child burial will rise £14 to £194.

An adult cremation will increase from £752 to £812, with cremations for children rising by £7 to £97.

The burial or cremation of a still-born baby, or a baby aged under one month, will remain free.

Dudley Council leader Pete Lowe admitted last year that funeral costs were expected to rise as the authority battles to meet its target of saving £25 million over the next three years.

The cost of memorials in cemeteries will increase by £20 to £276. A memorial on a baby's grave will now cost an extra £5 to £77. The council is aiming to make an extra half a million from bereavement services up to 2020.

Councillor Khurshid Ahmed, for planning and economic development, said: "We have already invested £1million to upgrade cremation facilities at Gornal Wood Crematorium and last year we opened a new cemetery in Dudley.

"The council will also need to spend in the region of £800,000 to upgrade facilities at Stourbridge Crematorium and we have a legal responsibility to take on the maintenance of closed churchyards. We have to look at ways of funding these improvements in such an essential service at such a difficult time for people."

3,000 sign leisure centres petition

PROTESTERS have reached a milestone in their petition against the closure of three leisure centres in the Dudley borough.

More than 3,000 signatures have been gained on paper and e-petitions by the Save Our Leisure Centres group. It means that the group could now push for a full council debate on the matter.

Dudley Council wants to demolish Halesowen Leisure Centre, Dudley Leisure Centre and The Crystal Leisure Centre, in Stourbridge, and then build two new facilities.

Councillor Khurshid Ahmed said it was likely to be another three years before plans came to fruition and that the public would be consulted 'at the appropriate time'.

Nativity proves real family affair

A NATIVITY at a Cradley church was a real family affair.

James and Becky Brookes and their seven-week-old son Samuel took on the roles of Joseph, Mary and baby Jesus at St Peter's Church.

Divided loyalties for footy-mad twins



Twins Max and Tom, aged five

FOR friends and family, recognising identical twins Tom and Max Donnelly can be tough. But there is one thing that tells them apart – their love for different football teams.

The boys celebrated their fifth birthday on Christmas Eve. And the football-mad siblings' divided loyalties meant their parents Karl and Kate had to buy different replica kits – a Wolves strip for Tom and a Villa one for Max. Their cake was a specially-designed half-and-half affair.

Tom and Max's club choices mirror their parents' own division, with Brummie Karl a Villa fan and 31-year-old nurse Kate coming from Wolves stock.

The twins' older brother Jack, seven, has nailed his flag to the Villa mast like his father. Mr Donnelly, aged 33, a fire-fighter in Dudley, said: "It just happened really – one sided with me and the Villa then the other one has gone over to the



A cake of two halves for the brothers

dark side. Then when it came to Christmas one of them asked for the Wolves home and away kits and the other asked for home and away kits for Villa.

"Now their mum is having to take Tom to a Wolves match in the new year

with her dad and I'll take Max to Villa with my dad who's also a Villa fan. I think [Tom and Max] both enjoy winding each other up about it – especially as they've got older."

Mr Donnelly, of Gornal, added: "We've actually got four sets of twins in the family and Tom and Max have nine-week-old twin cousins – Zachary and Harry.

"On their birthday we got lovely photos of the twins each holding one of their cousins.

"And we've been winding up [the cousins'] dad – who is a big Wolves fan as well – saying they're going to end up with one supporting Villa and one Wolves like ours."

Karl added: "I'm going to try and get Tom to change to the better side when he's a bit older, but I think he likes the attention when he's out with his brother and they get asked who they support."

Concern over sale of football legend's relics

MEMORABILIA of Black Country football legend Duncan Edwards is set to be sold to Manchester United in a deal that could see it relocated from Dudley to Old Trafford.

The collection was based at Dudley Museum and Art Gallery in the town centre and was due to be moved to Dudley Archives on Tipton Road amid the museum's closure last month due to money-saving cuts.

But now it has emerged that Edwards' former club Manchester United have been in talks with members of his family to buy the collection.

Sedgley UKIP councillor and West Midlands Euro MP Bill Etheridge has expressed concern that the memorabilia of a Dudley footballing hero could be lost to his home town.

He said council officers are working on a deal that could see parts of the collection loaned back to go on display at Dudley Archives, if the Premiership giants buy ownership of the collection devoted to one of their most famous players of the 1950s.

"The family have been very kind to allow the items to be on display to the public in Dudley for so long," he said. "However, it appears that they have now decided to sell the collection.

"I believe it is in the interests of the town to make some efforts to implore Manchester United to show some goodwill and allow some, if not all, of the items to remain on display here.

History

"The club have an excellent museum of their own but I am sure they realise how big a part Duncan Edwards has played in Dudley's history.

"It is important we do our bit to preserve his legacy in the town for future generations."

Mr Etheridge said he has written to Manchester United requesting a meeting to discuss the club's plans.

Rose Cook, founder of the Duncan Edwards Foundation, said: "Duncan's mum, Sarah, always said she wanted his memorabilia to be in Dudley. Hopefully Manchester United will also see it this way, but regardless of what happens to the collection, Duncan's legacy will still be kept alive in Dudley."

United and England player Edwards is honoured



Dudley-born United hero Duncan Edwards

with a statue in the town centre and a plaque at his former home near Priory Park. He was a part of Manchester United's famous Busby Babes side. He died aged 21 in 1958 of injuries sustained in the Munich air disaster, which claimed the lives of seven of his team mates, among 23 fatalities.

Dudley Council cabinet member for economic development, Councillor Khurshid Ahmed said: "We are in discussions with the family who own the Duncan Edwards collection about its future.



Memorabilia from Dudley Museum's display

"Duncan Edwards' legacy is a very important part of our tourism and clearly we will do everything we can to continue to celebrate his life in Dudley."

The Duncan Edwards & Local Sporting Heroes Gallery opened at Dudley's museum in 2008 and includes medals, shirts and 18 England caps.

Between 1952 and 1958, Edwards made 177 appearances for Manchester United.

He scored 21 goals and won the league twice, in 1956 and 1957.

Company lifts top customer award

A HOME lift company has won a top customer service award.

Stiltz Lifts, located on the Pensnett Estate in Kingswinford, won the Team of the Year at the British Healthcare Trades Association (BHTA) awards.

It was voted for by consumers who complete and return feedback cards throughout the year.

The award was accepted by Stiltz Lifts Chairman Mike Lord and Trade Sales Manager (UK) Gino Farruggio at the ceremony held at Broadgate in Bishopsgate, London, hosted by TV personality Penny Smith.

Green light for apartments plan

PLANNERS have given the go-ahead for 14 apartments to be built on land near Halesowen town centre.

The site will be in two separate blocks. Each apartment will have two bedrooms and two bathrooms. Residential parking will also be included.

It will be situated next door to the Travelodge Hotel development on Whitehall Road, he site is currently under offer for £300,000 with property company Westbridge & Co.

Plans for a Travelodge and KFC that created a total of 66 jobs were given the green light in 2010.

Empty old Co-Op on rental market

A FORMER Co-Op supermarket in Dudley has been put on the market to let after standing empty for more than two years.

The Fisher Street building is opposite Dudley Bus Station, next to the Churchill Shopping Centre.

It has shared access with Farmfoods and pedestrian access from both Birmingham Street and Birdcage Walk.

Offers to let are invited for the site, which is on the market with commercial property company Innes England.

MP angry at hospital parking charge income

DUDLEY North MP Ian Austin has hit out over the money made by hospital parking charges last year.

Dudley Group NHS Foundation Trust made £455,000 in 2015-16.

Mr Austin said: "I think the charges are outrageous. It's terrible that we have to pay so much when going for treatment or visiting relatives."

Dr Paul Harrison, trust acting chief executive, said funds were used towards maintaining the car parks and delivering 24-hour CCTV.

Singing group recruit

A BLACK Country choir is looking for new singers to boost its ranks.

Rehearsals for Viva Musica take place at Ham Dingle Primary School in Pedmore, Stourbridge and an open evening is taking place on January 17, from 7.30pm. For more details, visit www.viva-musica.co.uk

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Leisure centres offer special deals

DUDLEY Council is encouraging people to get fit in 2017 with special membership offers available at borough leisure centres until January 31. It enables people aged 16 and over to take out an annual membership for just £200, a saving of over £150, and there is a junior offer.

Equivalent to £16.67 per month, it includes unlimited use of Lifestyles gyms, swimming, fitness classes, badminton and squash (off-peak) and the running track at The Dell Stadium. For more information contact (01384) 812800 or visit dudley.gov.uk/sport

Firm boost for children's hospital

BRIERLEY Hill-based Commercial Express, has handed over £7,500 to its nominated charity, Birmingham Children's Hospital, following a year of fundraising.

The managing general agent managed held a variety of fundraisers, such as team member Vicky Copper abseiling down the One Snowhill building in Birmingham, team football matches, quiz nights, sponsored walks, a corporate golf day and a charity tuck shop in their offices.

They will raise money for the hospital again this year.

Delays expected from lane closure

DRIVERS are facing disruption on one of Dudley's busiest roads with a lane closure to be in place for a month while gas work takes place.

The lane will be shut on Tipton Road towards the Castle Gate Island and was due to close this week.

It means traffic will be filtered into one lane on the road passing the Black Country Living Museum and is likely to lead to delays at the busy roundabout which links with Birmingham Road, the A459 and A461.

Violin star's new date for his arena concert

ANDRÉ Rieu has rescheduled his December concert in Birmingham, which had to be cancelled after a long-term member of the Johann Strauss Orchestra became seriously ill.

The Dutch violinist and his easy listening orchestra will now play the Genting Arena, at the NEC, on March 22.

Tickets remain valid for the new date but those who cannot attend the rescheduled concert can get a full refund from the point of sale.

Fly to Transylvania

ROMANIAN airline Blue Air has launched a three-times-a-week service from Birmingham to Cluj-Napoca, the country's second largest city, located in Transylvania.

Blue Air is now flying from Birmingham to Cluj-Napoca on Mondays, Wednesdays and Friday.

Clubs are stunned by huge rent hike



Lye's Ray Cox and Dennis Hemmings

LYE Town Football Club and Lye Cricket Club could be forced to move after being hit with a proposed 500 per cent rent rise by Dudley Council.

Football club chairman Brian Blakemore said the hike on ground rent would be unaffordable and, if forced through, the non-league club would have to consider leaving its home of 87 years.

The lease on The Sports Ground, on Stourbridge Road, is up for renewal. The council has agreed to extend it for another 20 years on the condition of a five-fold increase.

Mr Blakemore said he was in negotiations with the council and the club needs to reach an agreement before the end of the season.

Lye Town have played at The Sports Ground since they were formed in 1930. It includes a clubhouse and stands.

The ground is shared with Lye Cricket Club, which is also involved in negotiations. Its chairman Dave Borley said the cricket club would 'struggle to survive' if it had to pay the huge increase.

Mr Blakemore, who has been chair-

man of the Midland Football League outfit for six years, said: that if council chiefs can't be persuaded to change their minds, the football club would look at trying to increase income through fundraising and sponsorship. But the club may have to leave The Sports Ground.

Councillor Khurshid Ahmed said he would be willing to hold discussions. He added: "Terms of the lease agreement were set in 1993. We have a legal obligation to ensure the rent covers all of our assets to ensure the public gets value for money."

Glassboys face fine over Cup match flare

STOURBRIDGE FC could be facing a fine after a flare was thrown onto the pitch during the club's FA Cup win over Northampton Town.

The Glassboys have been reported to the Football Association (FA) after the flare was thrown during the celebrations following Jack Duggan's winning goal.

It brings a sour note to what was one of the biggest wins in the club's history and secured them a place in the third round of the FA Cup for the first time.

Stourbridge chairman Andy Pountney warned any fans who bring flares to the War Memorial Ground in future will be banned.

The club has previously been warned about flares and smoke bombs.

A statement from Mr Poutney on the club's website said: "Bringing any pyrotechnic device into a football stadium in the UK is a criminal offence; this is clearly stated in our Ground Regulations document. Sadly, we have seen similar incidents of this nature occur before. Following each of these, we were warned about our future conduct by the FA, but fortunately escaped any further action at the time.

Implications

"Despite previous warnings to supporters, the actions of one individual could have implications for the whole of the football club, and how the FA will decide on this occasion we don't know. We can assure you that if any other supporter lets a flare off at any of our games going forward they will be banned indefinitely.

"We can also assure you that if we find out who the individual was that let the flare off on December 13 they will also be treated in the same manner.

"It's hard enough running the club without having to deal with this stupidity, so please just come along, have a great day and don't ruin it for everyone else."

The Glassboys netted £27,000 in prize money for getting through to the third round and having to give some of it back in the form of a fine would be a crushing blow, particularly as funding is so crucial at non-league level.

Stour take on Wycombe Wanderers in the next round. A win against the League One club on Saturday would see the Glassboys receive a further windfall of more than £70,000.

● Big match preview - pages 18, 19 and 40

Gardeners celebrate charity success



Volunteers celebrate as Hawbush Community Gardens is granted charitable status by the Charity Commission

RESIDENTS and volunteers are celebrating after a picturesque community garden was granted charitable status.

Hawbush Community Gardens was awarded the title after successfully applying to the Charity Commission.

Residents can use allotments at the Brierley Hill facility which is looked after by its users.

The garden space was granted charity status ahead of Local

Charity Day on December 16, which celebrates charity work in communities.

Hawbush Community Gardens is an oasis tucked into the Hawbush estate, where over the past few years residents and volunteers have tended the site.

They have created a community allotment space alongside a handful of private allotments. The facility also offers indoor space for different types of activities that

bring the community together. The group has worked with Dudley Council for Voluntary Service on gaining charitable status.

Michelle Betteridge, gardens trustee, said: "We are absolutely delighted to achieve charity status and thank Dudley CVS who have been a huge support."

Hawbush Community Gardens is now planning to run a variety of outdoor and indoor projects on the site in 2017.

Boy locked up for role in robbery beside canal

A 16-year-old who took part in a terrifying armed robbery of a couple beside a canal in Netherton has been sentenced to three years in youth custody.

The young couple's ordeal lasted over an hour after the defendant and three other men approached them while they were taking shelter from rain under a bridge and threatened them with what appeared to be a gun.

The incident on November 23 began when the male victim was ordered to hand over his phone. He was kicked and hit with the butt of a handgun, Wolverhampton Crown Court heard.

They discovered that he had keys to a motorbike and forced him to reveal where the machine was parked. They also took his PIN number and phone.

They threatened his girlfriend with the gun. "At one point the barrel was touching her forehead," said Miss Michelle Heeley, prosecuting.

She was forced to hand over her iPhone, PIN number and £20 cash. One of the group went to a cash machine and withdrew £250 but the teenager was later identified via a camera at the cash machine.

Defending the youth, who cannot be identified for legal reasons, Mr William Dudley argued that it could not be proved whether or not it was an imitation gun and said his client was subjected to 'peer group pressure'.

Judge Simon Ward passed a sentence of three years detention for two offences of robbery and one of possession of an imitation firearm which the youth, now aged 16, had admitted.

Have your say on dementia services

DUDLEY Council's dementia gateway service is encouraging people who have dementia, their family members and carers to give their views on local dementia care.

The Department of Health has launched the first phase of its Dementia 2020 Citizens' Engagement Programme. Councillor Qadar Zada, cabinet member for adult social care, said: "It is important that we make sure our services for people with dementia, and for their carers and family, are the right services which respond to the needs and wants of local people. I encourage anyone touched by dementia to get involved."

Visit consultations.dh.gov.uk/dementia/care-support-and-awareness or call (01384) 813600/813315.

Yoga studio gets the green light

PLANNERS have given the go ahead for an empty building near Stourbridge to be turned into a yoga studio.

The studio at Lye Business Centre, Enterprise Drive, will provide four full-time and ten part-time jobs.

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IN MY VIEW

with Mark Andrews



Shutting shop on spirit of Christmas

THERE is a great story about legendary Wolverhampton shopkeeper William Snape, who kept the famous tea and coffee emporium opposite this newspaper's office in Queen Street.

One Christmas Eve, sometime around the late 19th century, Mr Snape's assistant, a young boy called Albert, asked if there would be any chance of finishing work early. It was Christmas after all.

Mr Snape paused for thought, and asked the youngster if everywhere was tidy? Albert insisted it was.

"I don't think so," replied the boss as he took a flying kick at a bag of coffee beans, scattering them all over the floor.

Now I'm sure we're all glad those sort of employment practices are a thing of the past. However, I can't help but think that a bit of no-nonsense Victorian discipline wouldn't go amiss on a shop assistant I encountered over Christmas.

Now, admittedly 5.53pm on Christmas Eve is a bit last-minute. Well last seven minutes actually, but you get the point. However, the sign in the window said the shop – a very well-known high street retailer – would be open until 6pm, so why would you doubt it?

Eventually, a grey-haired lady came to the door with the greeting: "What's the problem?"

I pointed to the sign saying open until 6pm, and she replied: "You don't want to take any notice of that, it's Christmas Eve." I suggested it might be a good idea to advertise the correct opening times, and that it was rather poor service.

Grey-haired lady replied: "It's Christmas Eve, we've got families to be with, so on yer bike." And a happy new year to you, madam.

□□□

CONGRATULATIONS to Stourbridge FC for making football history as the lowest-ranked club to reach the third-round of the FA Cup.

Manager Gary Hackett has criticised the major broadcasters for overlooking his team's achievement, prompting opinion Mark Moran to contact me with a solution.

"Can you run a story about a Stourbridge-born optician who is offering free specs to BBC staff to help correct their short-sightedness?" he asks.

He suggests rose-tinted lenses for Alan Shearer, Gary Linker and Ian Wright over the way they wax lyrical about big-money sides like Chelsea.

□□□

SPRING will see the launch of the new 12-sided £1 coin, designed by Walsall schoolboy David Pearce, and the old coin will cease to be legal tender in October.

Now have a look through your change. How many shiny new £1 coins are there that have that have been minted in the past year or so? And they will all be melted down by the autumn. It's a good thing the country is awash with money, isn't it?



Reflected Glory by Sue Cutler



Southwark Cathedral by Craig Walton



Windmill by Kevin Howell

Snap happy? Try life through a lens

JUDITH HAWKINS takes a look at the winning shots by Hagley Camera Club members

A CAMERA club has rewarded its members for their picture perfect work and is calling on new people to get involved.

Hagley Camera Club offers tuition to those wishing to improve their skills behind the lens, as well as recognising the best snaps taken by its members in a series of competitions held across the year.

The club's variety of events enables attendees to both build upon their own photographic abilities and to learn more from others in the group, including through practical sessions, member presentations and talks from visiting lecturers.

Chair of the club, Richard Harding, said: "We're a little different from other camera clubs in that we don't categorise members by ability level, and aim to be inclusive of all."

Digital

"We run a mix of practical, digital editing, tuition, lecture, critique and competition evenings throughout the year."

Throughout the year members have had the chance to submit their best three shots into five competitions held by the club, accruing points for their entries which are then totted up to find an overall winner for the entire year.

Members are allowed to submit up to three entries per competition, and there were a total of five competitions during the year. Points are awarded for the top five.

Securing first place for the year was Craig Walton, whose striking image of Southwark Cathedral's stunning ceiling certainly shows off his considerable photographic skills.

Phil Homer was a worthy second, and it is clear to see why he scored so highly with his amusing image of a boy reading an old newspaper.



One of the photographs from the Hagley club members – Abreast of the News by Phil Homer

Taking third place was Kevin Howell, with his perfectly captured and serene picture of a windmill, while chair Richard Harding achieved fourth and should be particularly proud of his atmospheric picture of the 'Lady in the Lake'.

In fifth place was Sue Cutler, a glimpse of whom can be seen in her own photograph thanks to her effective use of the reflection in a vintage aeroplane's propellers.

Despite the name, the photographic club is actually based in Wordsley, at meets at Holy Trinity Church Hall every Tuesday at 8pm.

The first meeting of the New Year will be held this Tuesday, January 10, where attendees will be able to explore any new camera kit Santa might have brought them for Christmas.

A practical skills evening will take place the following week on January 17, and there will

be a 'get to know your camera' event held two weeks later on January 24.

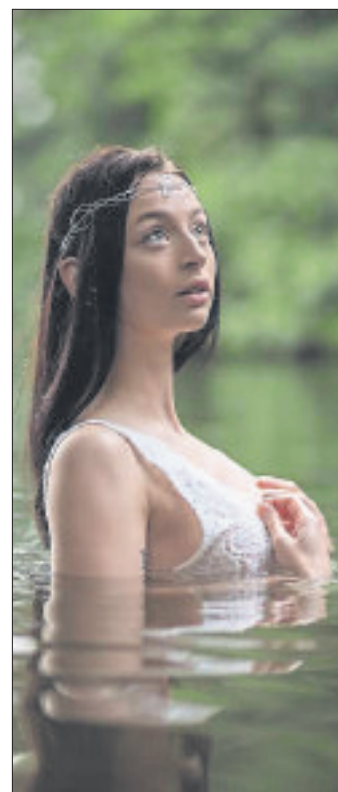
"This will be ideal for new members looking to understand a bit more about photography and their cameras to come and check us out," added Mr Harding.

Tutorials

More details, including a selection of photos taken by members, are available online at <http://www.hagleycameraclub.co.uk/> or by searching for 'Hagley Camera Club' on Facebook.

Annual membership is just £20, with a further fee of £3 per attended meeting. 'Specialist' meetings may cost a little more and will be advised in advance.

The club also has lots of useful tips and tutorials written by its members, which are free to download from its website.



Lady of the Lake by Richard Harding

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Museum move to Archives is already a dud

WHO'S Khurshid Ahmed kidding? He's certainly put the 'Dud' in Dudley with the move of Dudley Museum to the archives building.

Any self-respecting town takes a museum for granted in their town centre. The Dudley Archives building is way out of the town centre on Tipton Road, so the likelihood of picking up any passing trade (as Wolverhampton Art Gallery does in droves) is zero. So that means only those with the clear intention of visiting will make it down there.

Next problem, if they do arrive, is

parking. If you visit Dudley Archives even mid-week, you'll be hard pushed to find a space. Visitors will be forced to double-park and ask for a token to Black Country Living Museum car park. Good luck with that on a busy day.

The much-vaunted 'improved disabled access' is a non-starter too as the museum will be located on the first floor and there's only a goods lift.

They're expecting to run an exhibition programme with only one specialist person. They've fired the other four staff that worked at the museum.

Archives was built and expensively equipped with temperature controlled shelving precisely, as the name suggests, for storing archive documents – not for museum artefacts.

Once in storage the artefacts are unlikely ever to be shown again.

Expect a great deal of hot air and window-dressing when the 'grand new museum' is unveiled to the world.

Yet scratch beneath the surface and you'll find what it really is...a dud.

MARTIN JONES
Sedgley

Give us truth about the centres

MANY years ago, buildings were built in Dudley town centre that are still standing.

Too many to mention but the old 'Hen and Chickens pub' is one.

For the ignorant, that is on the corner of Castle Street and New Street. There are also the council buildings and the museum (for some reason the council are closing that, despite the fact that it belongs to residents).

Back to the leisure centres; these have been built in my lifetime, so their decline questions the brains who gave permission for them to be built.

Were they built to poor designs?

Was the quality of the materials used inferior?

Was the standard of workmanship inferior?

Come on, Dudley councilors, place your cards on the table and give us the truth, if you dare.

PETER COLE
Kingswinford

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

POST

Dudley Chronicle,
Chronicle Editorial,
51-53 Queen Street
Wolverhampton, WV1 1ES

EMAIL

dudley.chrons@
expressandstar.co.uk

Letters should be brief and MUST include name, address and telephone number. The Editor reserves the right to condense letters.

Voters should prove identity, says MEP

PROPOSALS for voters to have to prove their identity at the ballot box has my full support.

There have been squeals from some quarters about the Government's proposals but it is, frankly, overdue.

Fraud may not have been widespread, though no one can say for sure, but any such dishonesty taints our electoral system.

And I am pleased that 'harvesting' postal votes for submission by activists is to be banned.

I personally would go further and tighten up the eligibility of postal voters to those who are physically unable to get to a polling station.

As places have shown postal voting offers an easy opportunity for exploitation by those wishing to cheat the system. It is therefore appropriate that it is one of the places chosen for inclusion in this ID pilot scheme.

For those without photo ID two or three forms of proof, such as utility bills, could be used. All adults, rich or poor, should have the ability to vote.

The requirement for voter ID works in Northern Ireland and it should work here too.

JAMES CARVER
West Midlands UKIP MEP

Elderly care more vital than pitch

REGARDING the savage cuts the Dudley Council are proposing to 16 supported living schemes for the elderly. I suggested that other areas should be found instead of these proposed cuts. I said they always attack the most vulnerable in society.

Low and behold, the Dudley Council say they will be part funding a replacement football pitch at the Dell Stadium. £660,000 it's going to cost. Half a million pounds on grant, leaving the council to fund £160,000.

Now this football pitch may need replacing, but they have their priorities wrong if they are prepared to fund this and cut the supported living schemes while we are still in austerity times.

Also they are thinking about demolishing three leisure centres in the borough and building two in place of them. Who at the council is dreaming up these crackpot schemes?

BOB WHITEHOUSE
Kingswinford



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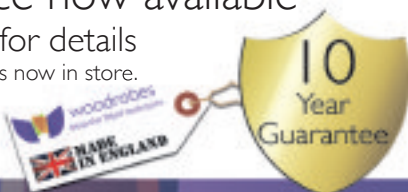
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Saucy jokes at 'Carry on panto'

REVIEW

by Leon Burakowski

Dick Whittington Birmingham Hippodrome **BRUM'S** big panto is a laughter riot, a colourful chaotic festive avalanche of raucous slapstick and saucy humour... but maybe too saucy.

As always at the Hippodrome, the costumes are stunning and the special effects, including a giant rat, flying reindeer sleigh and 3D underwater adventure, are second to none.

But the double and single entendres come thick and fast. So much so that mum and dad may be facing a few awkward questions from the youngest panto-goers. It feels like Carry On Panto.

It all starts with the panto hero's name. John Barrowman as tricky Dicky can't let those all-too-easy gags remain unsaid.

Super-showman Barrowman is a powerful singer and a decent hooper, and in no doubt of his own star quality. The confident panto star dominates every scene he is in.

He certainly has a rapport with tiny Janette Krankie, as Wee Jimmy, after appearing with panto veterans The Krankies at several Glasgow pantos.

In one scene he ends up in bed with Wee Jimmy (which is wrong on so many levels) and Barrowman goes on to manhandle the 68-year-old comedienne in a frenetic 12 Days of Christmas. I think I now know how it feels to cringe and laugh at the same time.

Those who delighted in The Krankies' panto appearances at Wolverhampton Grand will cheer the return of Wee Jimmy's Picking On Me song and the transformation into Ozzy Os-



Steve McFadden as King Rat and John Barrowman as Dick Pic by Paul Coltas

bourne and 'MacDonna', pointy bra and all, singing about living 'in a miniature world'.

Andrew Ryan as Sarah The Cook is as much drag queen as panto dame but looks stunning in mind-blowing costumes and does have some of the best lines.

Traditional

The traditional female roles, played by TV show winners turned West End stars Jodie Prenger (as Fairy Bow Bells) and Danielle Hope (as Alice), were largely kept out of the funny business and seemed merely present to look pretty and sing sweetly.

The heart of the panto - and this is a show lacking some heart - was Matt

Slack as Idle Jack, who is becoming a regular at the Hippodrome panto and is already booked to play Buttons in Cinderella next year.

Slack is a gifted physical comedian and impressionist. He did a great Michael McIntyre and a 'Grant Mitchell' in front of his TV brother, as East-End Steve McFadden plays King Rat with a whiplash tail and lots of villainous enthusiasm.

Slack also gets the balance of friendliness, silliness and making fun just right when shepherding the children on stage for the sing-along scene.

Dick Whittington continues at the Hippodrome until January 29.

It is anarchic and frequently hilarious but does deserve a PG certificate.



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FIVE MINUTES FROM MERRY HILL

New dish could leave chip shops squids in



Manager Chris Preece, of Stourbridge, with calamari (fried squid rings) served at Merchants fish and chips shop

IT is the traditional British takeaway on a Friday night. Fish and chips has been a national favourite for decades.

But lovers of cod and chips should enjoy it while it lasts, according to experts who claim it could disappear from menus and be replaced – by squid and chips.

Squid, often called calamari after its name in old Italian, can currently be picked up as a fancy starter at up-market Italian restaurants or enjoyed on holiday abroad. But declining cod stocks could in future mean it will be added to the menu at chippies, along-

side the pies, chicken, kebabs and tinned roe.

The Mediterranean seafood dish is already available at Merchants Fish and Chips in Worcester Street, Stourbridge.

Opened four years ago, the award-winning chip shop brought squid onto the menu to offer more variety to customers, says manager Chris Preece. It sells for £4.70 a portion and is served with salad, a lemon slice and dip.

Mr Preece said squid was rising in popularity but he thought it was doubtful, despite increasing fish prices and dwindling stocks of cod, that it

would replace the traditional favourites.

Lemon sole, haddock and plaice are more likely to replace cod as the number one fish and chips choice, according to Mr Preece.

Most squid is caught in China, frozen and sold to UK wholesalers. Mr Preece said it was defrosted, sliced into around a dozen thick rings, battered and then deep fried in rape seed oil.

He added: "I think it is a wonderfully light dish. It isn't as heavy as a fish and chips which means it makes a perfect light meal with a glass of wine. Sales have been increasing."

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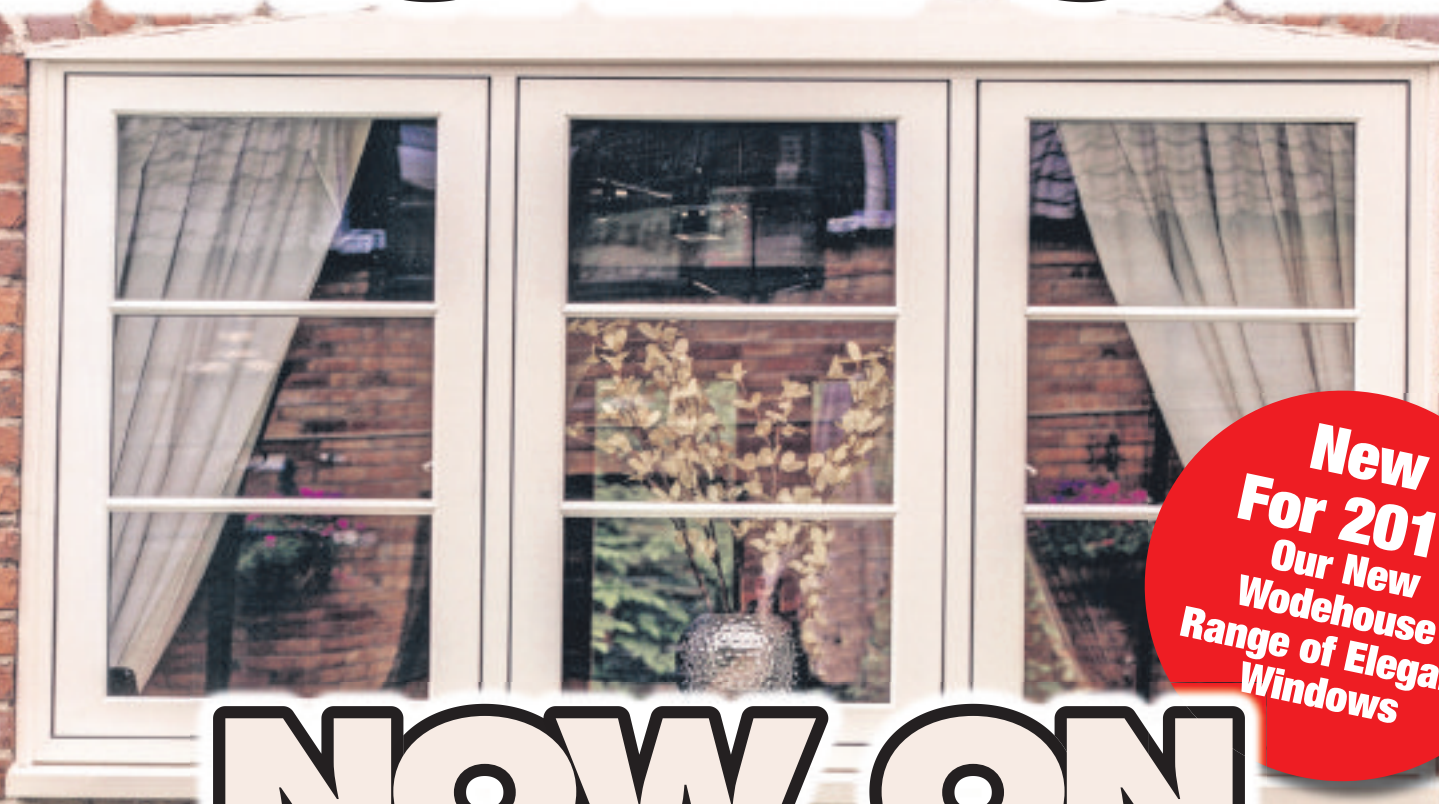
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Boost for playing fields

HAGLEY Playing Fields are set to benefit by £60,000 thanks to funding from new housing developments.

As part of planning permission for 24 homes off Brook Crescent and seven homes off Western Road, two separate developers had to pay a total of £60,000 towards public open space facilities in section 106 agreements.

Peter Rowbottom, of the Hagley Residents Action Group, said: "This is more great news for Hagley with all this money available for further improvements to facilities in the playing fields."

Quest zone suddenly closes at Merry Hill

THE Quest entertainment zone at Merry Hill closed suddenly just days before Christmas.

It was used by hundreds of families every week but has now shut.

A statement on the firm's website confirmed the 'incredibly difficult decision' to close, which comes after a turbulent few weeks.

Quest revealed last month that it was closing its outdoor play area as Merry Hill owner Intu wanted to use the area to create more parking spaces.

Bosses said at the time that the blow of losing the outdoor play area would mean having to make changes in order to survive.

But just six weeks later, the whole centre closed with the shutters down following the shock decision.

Difficulties

The company has previously faced difficulties during its time at Merry Hill and was saved from closure last year in a last-minute buyout.

Quest owner has Mark Knox promised to release more details about the decision to close at the Brierley Hill mall.

The indoor part of the centre provided a soft play area for youngsters while the centre was also home to Europe's highest indoor ropes course and mini golf.

The outdoor area had featured the Nerf combat arena.

Merry Hill said it was 'disappointed' to lose Quest.

A statement from Mr

By Richard Guttridge

Knox said: "We took the incredibly difficult decision to close Quest. After taking advice from our legal team we have ceased trading at Merry Hill.

"I will follow up with further news and give you all some facts that will hopefully quell the rumours. "My sincere apologies for the decision but in the coming days it will become clear why we've had to take the course of action."

Merry Hill spokesman Rob Pickersgill said: "We're disappointed to hear that Quest is closing down.

"This is a commercial decision taken by Quest and we wish their staff well."

Quest has proved popular with families across the West Midlands and the huge branding which is splashed across the centre will be recognisable to the thousands of shoppers.

Bosses at Quest had suggested they were unhappy at being asked to hand back the area occupied by its outdoor play area, saying they had 'tried to battle and fight to retain our space but with no success'.

Have a say at the community forum meetings

RESIDENTS can have their say on £25 million in cuts proposed by Dudley Council at the next round of community forums.

People are invited to one of the 10 forums which run throughout January to have their say on the council's budget proposals. There will be a representative from the police at each forum, to give people the opportunity to raise any crime or social order issues.

Community groups will also have the chance to apply for grants of up to £5,000.

Council leader Councillor Pete Lowe said: "Our community forums give local people the opportunity to get together and tell us about the issues that matter most to them."

The forums are being held at 6.30pm on: Tuesday: Woodside, St

Andrew, Quarry Bank and Dudley Wood at Woodside Community Centre on Highgate Road.

Wednesday: Brierley Hill, Brockmoor and Pensnett at The Oakfield Centre, Bretell Lane.

January 12: Norton, Pedmore, Stourbridge East, Wollaston and Stourbridge Town at Norton Community Centre on Kempton Way; Kingswinford, Wall Heath and Wordsley at Kingswinford Royal British Legion, Summerhill.

January 16: Amblecote, Cradley, Wollescote and Lye, Stourbridge North at Withymoor Primary School, Gayfield Avenue; Belle Vale, Hayley Green and Cradley South at Caslon Primary School, Beeches View Avenue.

For more information visit www.dudley.gov.uk/resident

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Recruitment day at safari park

A RECRUITMENT drive is being held by West Midland Safari Park for 200 seasonal workers.

A variety of roles are on offer including retail and admissions, food and beverages, games, venues, learning, facilities and wildlife. The positions are for zero-hour contracts and the work will run from February 1 to November 5.

A special recruitment day will be held at the park on Sunday, January 8. The event held in the park's Treetops Pavilion and the day will consist of two parts. Candidates will be invited to explore the opportunities on offer and speak to those who already work at the park to find out what life is like there. Visit www.wmnp.co.uk/careers to register.

Junior football team clash with FA over sponsor

THE future of a children's football team is in doubt after the FA ruled that a Black Country nightclub cannot sponsor its kit.

FA chiefs have said the two sponsors of Kings Heath Concorde FC's youth teams – The Arena in Stourbridge and Birmingham tattoo parlour Warstone Body Art – breach its regulations.

It means neither firm can have their names and logos on the team kits.

When the decision was announced the future of the Birmingham club's youth teams looked uncertain due to the cost of replacing its kits, but outraged supporters have rallied round, with one even donating £500.

Manager Russell Jukes said: "We decided to start the under eights and under 10s for the first time this season. I wrote about 50 letters to local businesses for support, but we didn't

hear anything back until a couple of parents came forward from Warstone Body Art and The Arena."

With these sponsors providing the kits they needed, the youngsters kicked off their season only for a complaint to the FA to stop them in their tracks.

Mr Jukes said: "There are lots of other teams around the country who are sponsored by tattoo parlours, so there doesn't seem to be any fairness."

Setback

"All we are trying to do is to get these kids off the streets and playing football," he said.

Before the FA's sponsorship ban, the club had been looking to expand its youth team provision and planned to provide teams for those aged from six to 10 from March next year. Despite this setback, Mr Jukes is determined to go ahead with additional teams.

Also disappointed by the FA's decision is Michelle Clarke, general manager at The Arena on Hagley Road. She said: "We are really upset. We are not only a nightclub. We have function rooms and do all sorts of events, like kids' dance sessions. The nightclub is only a small part of our business. We wanted to support the kids by buying their kit. We went with those from the tattoo studio to do a presentation at their Christmas party and saw how happy all the kids were to be part of the team."

Sarah Shand, owner of Warstone Body Art, in the Jewellery Quarter, whose nine-year-old son Louie plays for the team, said: "I just think it's an outdated decision."

At recent matches the under 10s used borrowed kit, while the under eights played with The Arena sponsorship taped over.

Mr Jukes said they would be looking to find a solution over the Christmas break as the youth teams to continue into 2017.

The Birmingham FA says the rules on what

is, and what is not, appropriate advertising have been drawn up at a national level and have been in place for a number of years.

Kevin Shoemake, chief executive officer of the Birmingham FA, said: "We are very sympathetic of our clubs and conscious of the efforts they go to to raise money for kit, venues, referees, courses and other football-related expenditure."

"But there are certain rules and regulations which clubs must adhere to, especially youth clubs. In this instance the FA has adjudicated and our hands are tied."

"Certain things are clear – if it's a pub, it's a no. Others are more subjective, like a social club that has a crèche."

"We will consider these on an individual basis and refer to the FA for any further guidance if need be. "We would encourage any youth team considering a sponsorship deal, if they have any doubts, to contact us."

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New beer for restaurant relaunch



Jack Forster, left, from Hickory's and Sadler's Steve Robinson sample the new brew

A BLACK Country brewery will be rolling out the barrels after securing a tasty deal with a nationwide chain of restaurants.

Sadler's, in Lye, has created Goose Creek, an American style IPA, for Hickory's, which has smokehouse restaurants up and down the country – including one due to reopen in Wall Heath later this year after a devastating fire.

Ian King, sales director at Sadler's, said: "We're absolutely over the moon with this opportunity. We're very much looking forward to a successful 2017 where we'll be working closely with Hickory's."

The team have been mixing malts and playing with some unique flavours for the past few months in a quest to create a truly authentic beer for their guests that was able to match their barbecue-style American food in both boldness and character.

Head of bar development at Hickory's Smokehouse, Sammy Sale, said: "We have had an amazing day with Ian and the team at Sadler's. It's a real honour to be able to tap into their incredible knowledge. We are hoping their input really shines through in our next batch of Goose Creek."

Hickory's currently have restaurants in Chester, West Kirby, Rhos-on-Sea and Burton Green.

"The new restaurant and bar in Wall Heath is going to be bigger and better than ever," added Mr Sale. "After all the amazing support we have had we think our guests deserve their very own beer to toast the launch of their new Smokehouse."

Hickory's Smokehouse in Kidderminster Road, at the former Kingfisher Club site, is due to open again in July – almost a year since the blaze caused by an electrical fault.

Jail sentence after a decade dealing 'speed' Student art on display

A DRUG dealer found with up to £3,000 worth of amphetamines in his car confessed to a decade of dealing 'speed' and has been sentenced to 12 months in prison.

Alexander Kardys, a Polish national, was pulled over near his home in High Street, Lye, on March 29 for erratic driving. Officers spotted a bag of powder on the back seat. There was also a set of scales and a spoon for measuring.

Prosecutor Amy Edinborough told Wolverhampton Crown Court: "Officers stopped him and could detect the smell of cannabis when the door was opened. A bag containing white powder was seen on the back seat. The defendant told the police it was amphetamine and said he had been dealing it for the past 10 years."

In total, 444g of the drug were found, with a street value of up to £3,000. Kardys had previous motoring offences but no drugs convictions. The 40-year-old pleaded guilty to possession of a Class B drug with intent to supply.

A NEW art gallery in Cradley Heath, The ArtYard, is lending exhibition space to art students.

Opening to the public this month, the exhibition entitled An Oblique Moment features paintings, print and 3D work by students Charis Neale and Linda Bridges, who are in the second year of their HND Fine Art course at Stourbridge.

The exhibition runs on January 13 and 14, from 10am until 4pm at the Reddall Hill Road venue, which opened last year.

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Sarah 07815 071982

NEW CONSULTANT
ROWLEY REGIS 7pm
Dudley Golf Club, Turners Hill
Sarah 07815 071982

DUDLEY WOOD 9.30am
Dudley Wood Methodist Church,
Quarry Road
Lisa 07986 673899

QUARRY BANK 5pm & 7pm
Thorns Primary School
Thorns road
Lisa 07989 673899

WORDSLEY 5pm & 7pm
Richardson Hall, Lawnswood Road
Ian 07970 147592

SEDGLEY 5pm & 7pm
St Chads & All Saints Social Club
High Holborn, Dudley Rd
Gaz 07517 675787

NETHERTON 5.30pm & 7pm
Cole Street Methodist Church,
Cole Street
Heather 07729 105659

TUESDAY

NEW TIMES
NORTON 9.30am & 11.30am
Scout Hut, Kempton Way
Caroline 01562 888315

NEW GROUP
WORDSLEY 7pm
Richardson Hall, Lawnswood Road
Maddie 07815 132320

NEW VENUE
GIGMILL/NORTON 7pm
Gigmill Methodist Church, Glebe Rd
Kelly 07508 406909

NEW TIME
DUDLEY (Wrensnest) 9.30am
Wrensnest Community Centre,
Summer Road
Louise 07967 624573

WOLLASTON 7pm
St James C of E Primary School,
Kingsway
Joanne 07967 624573

BROMLEY/ KINGSWINFORD
3pm, 5pm & 7pm
The Dingle Community Centre,
Madley Rd
Vicky 07906 875612

WALL HEATH 5.30pm & 7.30pm
Maldensbridge Primary School, Beech-
croft Road
Jenny 07983 568652

GORNAL WOOD 9.30am
Himley Road Methodist Church, (large
car park at rear via Chapel Walk)
Becki 07986 40793

WORDSLEY 9.30am
Richardson Hall, Lawnswood Rd
Ian 07970 147592

WOODSETTON 6pm & 7.45pm
Bramford Primary School, Park Road
Louise 07967 624573

GORNAL 5pm & 7pm
Zoar Methodist church, Abbey Road
Becki 07986 407934

NETHERTON 9.30am
Cole Street Methodist Church, Cole
Street
Heather 07729 105659

ROWLEY REGIS 5.30pm & 7.30pm
Rowley Regis Disability Centre, 26
Rowley Village
Kenton 07982 408088

AMBLECOTE 6pm & 7.30pm
Peters Hill Primary School,
Peters Hill Road
Lynne 01384 455427

PEDMORE
5.30pm & 7.30pm
Hob Green School, Hob Green Road
Paula 07846 847068

WEDNESDAY

NEW GROUP
WORDSLEY 9.30am
Richardson Hall, Lawnswood Road
Maddie 07815 132320

NEW GROUP
BELBROUGHTON 7pm
The Bell
Bromsgrove Road
Jo 07966 296118

NEW CONSULTANT
LOWER GORNAL 7pm
The Straits Primary School, Milton
Crescent
Louise 07967 624573

NEW TIMES
KINGSWINFORD 3pm, 5pm & 6.30pm
British Legion, Summerhill Road
Ann 07787 186259

STOURBRIDGE 9.30am
Town Hall (Wollaston Road)
Crown Centre
Marie 01384 893001

PEDMORE 5.30pm & 7.30pm
Hob Green School, Hob Green Road
Paula 07846 847068

OLDHILL 9.15am
Holy Trinity Church, Halesowen Road
Sarah 07815 071982

OLDHILL 5.30pm & 7.30pm
Holy Trinity Church, Halesowen Road
Sarah 07815 071982

WEDNESDAY

AMBLECOTE 5.30pm & 7.15pm
Amblecote Primary School, School Drive
Caroline 01562 888315

OLDSWINFORD
3.45pm, 5.30pm & 7.30pm
St Mary's Church Hall, Rectory Road
Kerry 01384 833812

BROCKMOOR 9.30am & 11.30am
Brockmoor Community Centre,
Pensnett Rd
Ian 01384 827999

NETHERTON 7pm
Hill Crest School and Community
College, Slimms Lane
Heather 07729 105659

TIVIDALE 5pm & 7pm
St Michaels Church, Tividale Road
Kenton 07982 408088

BRIERLEY HILL 7pm
Withymoore Primary School, Gayfield
Avenue
Lynne 01384 455427

UPPER GORNAL 9.30am
Upper Gornal Methodist
Church, Spills Meadow
Lynne 07963 539384

DUDLEY/UPPER GORNAL 7pm
Bishop Milner RC School, Broadway
Entrance, Burton Road
Sue 01902 882323

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Ciara 07938 090604

NEW GROUP
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Church of the Ascension, Dudley Road
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Bromsgrove Road
Jo 07966 296118

STOURBRIDGE 10am
St Thomas Church Hall
Market Street
John 01384 423616
HAWBUSH/BRIERLEY HILL 5pm & 7pm
Oakfield Community Centre,
Brettle Lane
John 01384 423616

STOURBRIDGE 5.30pm & 7.30pm
Greenfield Primary School, Hill Street
Marie 01384 893001

OLDBURY 7pm
Portway Lifestyle Centre, Newbury Lane
Claire 07539 950447

TIVIDALE 7pm
Ormiston Sandwell Community Acade-
my, Lower City Road
Sarah 07875 445462

DUDLEY 10am & 12 noon
Central Methodist Church
Cross Street
Sarah 07837 950797

DUDLEY 5pm & 7pm
Central Methodist Church
Cross Street
Sarah 07837 950797

SEDGLEY 5pm & 7pm
St Chads & All Saints Social Club,
Dudley Rd
Sue 01902 882323

BRIERLEY HILL 9.15am
Nine Locks Community Centre,
Hill Street
Gill 01384 830929

LYE 7pm
Lye Cricket Club, Stourbridge Road
Pauline 07999 408086

HAGLEY 5.30pm & 7.30pm
Hagley Primary School,
Park Road
Terry 07807 028308

SEDGLEY/UPPER GORNAL 5pm & 7pm
St Chads & All Saints Social Club,
Dudley Road
Sue 01902 882323

FRIDAY

NEW GROUP
ROWLEY REGIS 9.30am
Dudley Golf Club, Turners Hill
Stacey 07411 486694

NEW TIMES
KINGSWINFORD 9.30am & 11.30am
St Mary's Church Hall, The Village
Sue 07825 354224

STOURBRIDGE 9.30am
Bonded Warehouse, Canal Street
Joanne 07725 987340
SEDGLEY 9.30am
Sedgley Community Centre, Ladies Walk
(access via the priory)
Gareth 07517 675787
ROWLEY REGIS 9.30am
Rowley Regis Disability Centre, 26
Rowley Village
Kenton 07982 408088

SATURDAY

NEW GROUP
BROMLEY/ KINGSWINFORD
8.30am
The Dingle Community Centre,
Madley Rd
Vicky 07906 875612

NEW GROUP
PEDMORE 9am
Chawn Hill Church, Chawn Hill
Pauline 07999 408086

NEW TIMES
LOWER GORNAL
7.45am, 9.45am & 11.45am
Roberts Primary,
Robert Street
Sarah 07837 950797

HAWBUSH/BRIERLEY HILL
7.30am, 9.30am & 11.15am
Oakfield Community Centre,
Brettle Lane
Joanne 07725 987340

CRADLEY 8am & 10am
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Mogul Lane
Amanda 07862 274058

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Hippodrome keys are handed to campaigners

THE keys to Dudley Hippodrome have been handed over to campaigners who helped save the historic venue from demolition.

The long-awaited moment finally came 78 years since the day the theatre was first opened.

Members of the Black Country Hippodrome group have spent years campaigning to save the Castle Hill landmark and can now begin work on transforming the venue and re-open to the public as a theatre for the first time in half a century.

The group, which was started by Geoff Fitzpatrick and Malcolm Palmer, have been busy working with architects who are finalising preparations to refurbish the building, which includes a large extension next to Trindle Road.

Within the extension will be a new entrance, cafe and box office.

A first floor bar and restaurant also features in the plan.

But around £5 million needs to be raised by the group to ensure the Hippodrome can open again.

Dr Paul Collins, chairman of the Black Country Hippodrome Limited, said, as the keys were handed over: "It's been a combination of five years hard work and I'm accepting these keys on behalf of everyone who's worked on this campaign.

"We hope that the new hippodrome will kick-start the rebirth of Dudley.

"Hard work and fundraising will now begin to get everything together to begin work on the building which is now a robust shell and turn it into an open working vibrant theatre."

He added: "We'd like to thank the council for putting their trust in us."



Dudley Council leader Councillor Pete Lowe hands over the keys to Dr Paul Collins, Hippodrome chairman

New transport app gets a regional trial

THE West Midlands is the only place outside of Finland that will be trialling a new integrated transport system.

The Whim app allows people to combine all their travel needs via their smartphone.

The region will be the UK's testing ground for Whim, an app which has been developed in Finland. The scheme is a collaboration between Transport for West Midlands, MaaS Global of Helsinki and transport providers.

Whim aims to encourage people to use transport other than the private car by giving them a travel plan tailored to their individual needs. Users pay for what transport they think they will require – ranging from car hire to taxis, bus, tram and train travel – over the course of a month or on a pay-as-you-go basis. The app will also establish the best journey routes and tickets deal.

Councillor Roger Lawrence, lead member for transport at West Midlands Combined Authority, said: "This is a great idea to encourage people to consider how they get about other than with the private car."

The pilot will run for 12 months. See whimapp.com/uk

£1m fraud conman is found and locked up

A FRAUDSTER who went on the run after the first day of his trial for a £1 million publishing con is finally behind bars.

Michael Phelan, from Stourbridge, was discovered in a betting shop on the south coast after he absconded from court and went on the run for two months.

In October he was found guilty in his absence and sentenced to seven-and-a-half years after failing to turn up on the second day of his trial at Birmingham Crown Court.

The 61-year-old was arrested by Dorset Police in Bournemouth High Street and eventually started his prison sentence on December 15.

He had been convicted of 33 offences of fraud and theft for having run a business franchise con.

It came following a lengthy investigation by trading standards' national scam-busting team.

Phelan, originally from Cardiff, used the name Mike Jones to dupe people into investing in his crooked scheme.

He promised victims a guaranteed level of earnings and their money back within 12 months if they wanted to opt out.

Recruited

Victims were recruited to buy the rights to distribute his books for between £4,750 and £79,000. However, when they requested to see the books they were unavailable or the promised support never materialised.

The scam ran for more than 10 years with making Phelan about £1m.

During the trial, evidence was heard from more than 30 witnesses from across the country who had invested money in the scheme. Many had been left bankrupt and even homeless.

One victim from Blackpool, loaned Phelan £90,000, most of which was never



Conman Michael Phelan

repaid and Phelan moved to the West Midlands. He soon started to again to recruit agents into his bogus scheme, operating out of Stourbridge and Brierley Hill.

After he failed to return to court, claiming he was ill, inquiries showed he had cleared out the room he had been renting and the trial continued without him.

Brought back to Birmingham Crown Court after his arrest, he admitted an additional offence of failing to attend court whilst on bail. Phelan was sentenced to an additional six months in jail for that offence, to run consecutively to the initial term, making a total of eight years behind bars.

Lord Toby Harris, chairman of National Trading Standards, said: "I am pleased that Mr Phelan has now been brought to justice.

"He operated a major fraudulent scheme. The scheme left his victims out of pocket and in many cases bankrupt or homeless."

Photo show at the NEC

THE Photography Show 2017 is coming to Birmingham's National Exhibition Centre in March.

Experts will show how to capture stunning images in the show's Behind the Lens Theatre. Sessions are included in the show entry ticket fee and will take place each day from March 18 to 21. Tickets are on sale from the www.photographyshow.com website.

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Hey Bully, remember me? I sat on your knee

A WOMAN has recreated a photograph taken of her with Wolves legend Steve Bull 20 years ago.

Just days before her 21st birthday, Ellie Bentley visited the Merry Hill shopping centre when the football hero was promoting his book, *Bully - Forever Wolves*.

Ellie, who previously has been been a mascot for Wolverhampton Wanderers, is an avid season ticket holder at Molineux.

She first met the footballer at the tender age of one at a local pub when he was doing some promotion work.

She was at the shopping centre recently with her mother and boyfriend to get her hands on a copy of the book for a Christmas present for her stepfather.

The 20-year-old, who is an administrator at Russells Hall Hospital and a business student at Worcester University, said: "It was a bit awkward at first, trying to explain that I wanted to recreate the photo but



Fan Ellie Bentley meets Wolves legend Steve Bull again - 20 years on



Steve was lovely and I think my stepdad will love the book as he's a massive fan."

Fame

The book tells the story of Bull's 30-year association with Wolves, charting his remarkable rise to fame and his life since hanging up his boots.

It has been jointly compiled by the Express & Star and Wolves and it was written by Wolves correspondent Tim Spiers, along with Wolves media relations manager Paul Berry.

The book is priced at £14.99. Copies can be ordered online at bullybully.net/ or at the Wolves club shop.

Check the Steve Bull MBE Facebook for dates of further book signings.

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Councillors' allowances being slashed as part of bid to make £25m savings

COUNCILLORS could take a cut in their allowances as Dudley Council continues to look for new ways to save £25 million.

Leader of the council, Councillor Pete Lowe, has put forward plans to cut his allowance by 10 per cent, while other councillors would lose five per cent.

The leaders of both opposition groups have also agreed to lose 10 per cent from their allowances under the plans.

It comes amid complex negotiations with unions over proposals to introduce changes to terms and conditions for all staff. The council promises to protect the lowest paid staff and a pay freeze will be introduced for those earning above £23,000.

The new plans also include three days unpaid annual leave to be taken over the Christmas shutdown period.

The proposals were agreed by cabinet last month and will now form the basis of negotiations between unions and employees.

Councillor Lowe said: "As leader of this council I have made a very clear commitment to cut my own leader allowance by 10 per cent.

Challenging

"We are facing some very challenging times because of unprecedented and continued reductions in funding from national government, and it is important as councillors we lead from the front by cutting our own allowances to save money.

"It is only fair to staff and the public that we are in this together in leaving no stone unturned in finding savings.

"We must also make sure that the savings from staff terms and conditions are fair, which is why we are suggesting the lowest paid of our staff are protected from a pay freeze.

"The original proposals were only ever the start of a thorough negotiating process and finding a way forward in the interests of staff.

"These measures will still meet the savings we are having to make, but also recognise that everyone will be affected in different ways by cuts."

The proposals include a pay freeze for staff earning £23,166 and over and an additional overtime freeze for staff who earn £36,937 and above.

It means 44 per cent of staff – the lowest earners at the authority – will be protected.

The proposals also include a reduction in car mileage allowance from 55p to 45p per mile.

Council bosses will consult with unions on the measures which have been put forward as part of £25m package of savings over three years.

The budget report forecasts that there will still be a deficit of £9m by 2019/20 if more savings are not found.

PUBLIC AUCTION

REVENUE & CUSTOMS VAT DEBT OF £50,212 (EXP 12/1/17)

A 40ft Shipping Container of expensive cargo destined for Hong Kong has been re-directed and will now be offered for **Urgent Disposal in Dudley on 7/1/17.**

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Once the required monetary figure is achieved on the day, the Auction will close (approx 3hrs from start).

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Stourbridge celebrate in the dressing room after the second round victory

Glassboys aim to smash it!



STOURBRIDGE make FA Cup history this weekend with their first ever venture to the third round of the famous competition.

The Glassboys are the lowest ranked team still left in the Cup.

Jack Duggan's late goal over League One Northampton put Gary Hackett's men into dreamland. Having already gone further than ever before, they travel to Wycombe's

Gary's men want to prove that they can Hackett in the FA Cup

Adams Park on Saturday hoping to take that run even further.

The Glassboys had already negotiated four qualifying round ties – all away from home, before despatching Whitehawk, of the National League South, in the first round proper.

Chris Lait and Luke Benbow (2) were on target in a replay at Amblecote after a controversial draw away from home in which Dan Scarr scored. Victory over the Cobblers followed, in a rearranged tie fol-

lowing the postponement of the original tie just hours before kick off.

Wycombe, managed by Gareth Ainsworth, are unbeaten in 11 – 10 of them wins – following Monday's victory over Newport County and currently occupy a play-off position, in fifth.

Their cup run so far has seen them beat Portsmouth, 2-1 and Chesterfield 5-0, both away from home.

But Stourbridge aim to make manager Gary Hackett proud again at the weekend.



Jack Duggan celebrates after scoring the vital goal



Defender Dan Scarr hitches a lift on the back of coach Mark Clifton



Stourbridge's Luke Benbow and Matt Dodd celebrate at the final whistle

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Does it get any better? Overjoyed fans celebrate success

Army of fans to cheer on heroes

STOURBRIDGE will be backed by 2,000 supporters for their historic FA Cup tie away at Wycombe Wanderers on Saturday.

Tickets for the third round match sold out before even going on general sale, with an army of fans ready to descend on Buckinghamshire to cheer on Gary Hackett's men.

The match against the League Two side will be one of the biggest in the Glassboys' history.

It is the first time Stourbridge have made it to the third round of the competition.

A win would provide the possibility of being

drawn against the likes of Manchester United or Liverpool in the next round.

A statement on the club's website said: "Unprecedented demand from within the club means that our allocation of tickets has been taken up in full.

Announce

"This means there was no need for the tickets to go on general sale.

"It is great news that we can announce that our allocation of 2,000 tickets for this game has been sold out in record time."



Jubilant fans flood onto the pitch after the 1-0 win over Northampton Town



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Lucy o-Kay with range of big roles

Lucy Kay shot to fame when she sang her way to the final of Britain's Got Talent in 2014.

The 27-year-old's singing career duly delivered, securing a record deal with Sony and then her debut album, *Fantasia*, shooting to No1 on the classical music charts.

She performed the national anthem for the 2014 Community Shield football match at Wembley in front of 80,000 alongside one of the most iconic and influential performers in opera, Andrea Bocelli.

She then topped off a remarkable year with a performance fit for royalty, singing in front of Prince Andrew, Sarah Ferguson and their two daughters along with a long line of A-listers at a private dinner held at Windsor Castle in aid of Children in Crisis.

It has been a real rags to riches story for this year's Wolverhampton pantomime princess.

It wasn't always glitz and glamour for the Leicester-born singer, who admits growing up was difficult without her father, who left when she was a baby, and bullies made much of her early life miserable. She said: "Growing up was a struggle, my childhood wasn't one you'd hope for for your children. With my dad leaving when I was born, I took that hard and assumed it was my fault."

"Apparently as I was growing up, I was always asking strangers, men, if they were my dad, which for my mum was really embarrassing. From that, when I used to make friends I used to be more needy than most, people took advantage of that which set me up for being bullied. We moved to quite a poor area of Mansfield where I got bullied for being from a different area."

"Then when I started singing, as it was classical, I got bullied for that too."

"As well as the mental abuse, there was physical abuse. I have scars from cigarettes they put out on my chest."

"It got to a point in my life where I thought, 'I'm not sure if I want to be here', and it's sad for a child to think like that."

While school bullies may have fulfilled the role of the cruel step-sisters as in *Cinderella*, there was a trio of strong women who stepped forward to play the role of the fairy godmother. Her mother, Glenis, proved to be a supportive role model throughout her youth and Lucy confesses it was her encouragement which got her to where she is.

Other contenders for the role include Pamela Cook, founder of Cantamus, the choir she would later join. "She helped me

financially and to get to uni, she unfortunately passed away before I went on Britain's Got Talent, she would have been proud."

Elaine Guy, also from the choir group, home-tutored Lucy free of charge to resit her GCSEs and take her A-levels so she'd get into music college. She'd failed her GCSEs first time round down to the bullying she suffered.

Lucy's big break came when she appeared in front of 2,000 people and four intimidating judges on TV show Britain's Got Talent, with 11 million people watching at home.

An edited version of proceedings didn't show Lucy sing *Who Wants To Live Forever* by Queen, a song chosen by the BGT producers. It was a track she wasn't comfortable singing, resulting in Simon Cowell stopping her, telling it was a bad audition and asked her for another song.

What made the cut was her version of opera song *Vissi d'arte*, leaving the audience and judges stunned and a standing ovation followed.

Successful

She finished runner-up in the competition and then went on to sing on several successful tours proving hugely popular as a contemporary soprano. However this year Lucy took to the stage in a different form – as the narrator in Joseph and the Amazing Technicolour Dreamcoat, which proved popular at the Grand Theatre.

She said: "I was really nervous at Joseph but I got through it and I had good reviews fortunately – I had a week to learn everything."

As in all fairytales, it's happily ever after for Lucy as she's currently playing Princess Jasmine in *Aladdin* and thriving in her latest role.

She said: "I love the cast in *Aladdin*, we all get on so well and we have a good laugh when things go wrong too, which is really important."

"The Grand is a really nice venue with the revamp and Bohemians [situated across Lichfield Street] is a great bar, I love it there. Slater's is really nice too, we had our Christmas party there, everyone was really friendly."

Aladdin runs at Wolverhampton Grand Theatre until January 22.

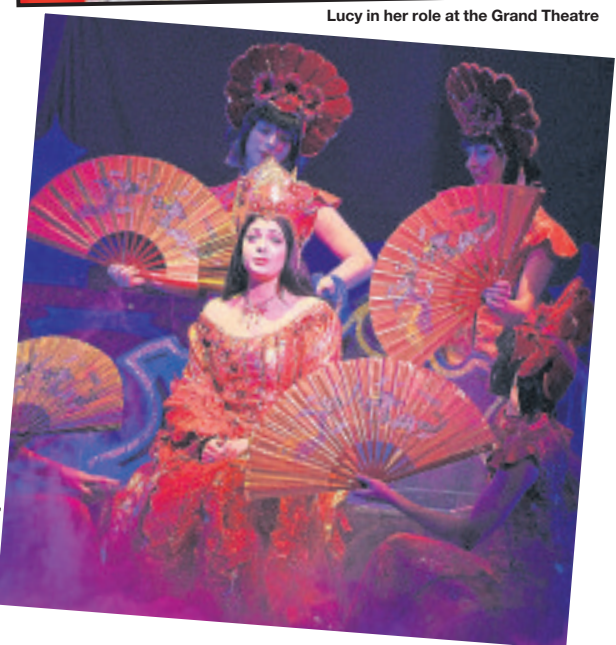
Tickets can be bought from the box office in person or by calling 01902 42 92 12 or online at grandtheatre.co.uk

By Doug Wootton

● For the full interview, visit www.express.co.uk/entertainment/



Lucy in her role at the Grand Theatre



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Gales free

Unfortunately, you have to go through some things to be free', says Memphis-born Eric Gales.

"Now, I feel the most free I've ever been in life, even more so than when I was a kid," he opens up. "You gotta help yourself man, once you can help yourself you can genuinely help someone else."

His new album, *Middle Of The Road*, will be released on February 24. "It's about being fully focussed and centred in the middle of the road. If you're on the wrong side and in the gravel you're not too good and if you're on the median strip that's not too good either, so being in the middle of the road is the best place to be."

It is Gales' fourth album on Provogue/Mascot label Group after *Transformation* (2011), *Relentless* (2010) and *The Psychedelic Underground* (2007) and it sees him at his most expressive yet. It is a deeply personal and reflective record that echoes where he is in his life right now and he opens himself up and allows himself the chance to really flourish.

It's well documented that Gales was a child prodigy and heralded as the second coming of Jimi Hendrix when he released his debut album *The Eric Gales Band* in 1991 as a 16-year-old on Elektra Records. It was the first of 10 albums on a major label through a blistering career. He has released 14 studio albums in total ahead of *Middle of the Road* and a host of other collaborations, one of which led him to work with producer Fabrizio Grossi.

Lie-in King

A funnyman described by one national newspaper as 'unquestionably the best observational comic of his generation' is heading to Telford.

Lie-in King Seann Walsh has also been described as 'one of comedy's hottest properties...very talented, very funny'.

He has also previously toured successful show *Ying and Young* with fellow comedian Josh Widdicombe.

He will bring his new show to Oakengates Theatre @ The Place on Thursday, March 23, 2017 at 8pm.

Venue spokesman Chris Kowalik said: "As star of Channel 4's *Stand Up For The Week* and BBC1's *Live At The Apollo*, you might have seen Seann on TV, but he's something else live – pacing the stage, working the room and reducing crowds to hysterics. Even if he'd probably rather be at home watching Sky Sports News."

The show received positive press after being unveiled at the Edinburgh Fringe Festival and fans can look forward to the usual oddball looks at everyday life from Seann.

Tickets for The Lie-in King at Oakengates Theatre @ The Place are £15.

They are on sale now and can be booked online at www.theplaceatelford.com or by calling the box office on 01952 382382, or in person at the theatre or Southwater One in Telford Town Centre.

Hungry show

One of the most iconic characters in children's literature will be arriving in Birmingham next month when The Very Hungry Caterpillar Show plays at New Alexandra Theatre for two nights from Monday, January 30 following a West End run.

The Very Hungry Caterpillar Show will feature a menagerie of 75 enchanting puppets during a magical 60-minute show that faithfully adapts four of Eric Carle's best-loved books for the stage: *The Artist Who Painted A Blue Horse*, *Mister Seahorse*, *The Very Lonely Firefly* and, of course, *The Very Hungry Caterpillar*. Eric Carle's books have captivated generations of readers with their iconic hand-painted illustrations and distinctively simple stories, introducing millions of children to a bigger, brighter world, and to their first experience of reading itself.

His best-known work, *The Very Hungry Caterpillar*, has nibbled its way into the hearts of millions of children all over the world. It has been translated into 62 languages and sold more than 43 million copies, remaining one of the top 10 best-selling children's books of all time.

Since it was first published in 1969, Eric Carle has illustrated more than 70 books, most of which he also wrote, and more than 132 million copies of his books have sold around the world.

Strictly special start to the year



The Strictly Come Dancing glitterball champions 2016 Ore Oduba and Joanne Clifton, who will be replaced by Karen Clifton

THE final line-up for has been announced for the Strictly Come Dancing Live Tour – including dates later this month in Birmingham.

The show will feature 2016 winner Ore Oduba but instead of his glitterball winning partner Joanne Clifton, he will be dancing with her fellow professional (and sister-in-law) Karen Clifton.

Joanne is preparing to star in the

UK tour of musical Thoroughly Modern Millie, which visits Birmingham's New Alexandra Theatre in February.

Also in the Strictly show rom January 20 to 22 at Birmingham's Barclaycard Arena will be Louise Redknapp with Kevin Clifton, Danny Mac and Oti Mabuse, people's favourite Ed Balls with Katya Jones, Daisy Lowe and Aljaž Skorjanec and Lesley Joseph with Gorka Marquez.

Completing the line-up are professional dancers Giovanni Pernice, Janette Manrara, AJ Pritchard, Chloe

Hewitt, Oksana Platero and Neil Jones. The celebrities and pro dancers will be joined by judges Len Goodman, Craig Revel Horwood, who also directs the show, and Karen Hardy. The 2017 tour host is Anita Rani.

The show kicks off in Birmingham on Friday (20) at 7.30pm, Saturday (21) at 2.30pm and 7.30pm and Sunday (22) at 1.30pm and 6.30pm. Tickets are on sale from www.theticketfactory.com or by calling 0844 33 88 222. For more information, visit www.strictlycomedancinglive.com



Kara stars in a chiller

CLASSIC thriller Gas Light must be one of the few plays that has given rise to a term for psychological abuse, in that 'gaslighting' means making someone doubt their own sanity.

A fresh revival of crime writer Patrick Hamilton's play stars Kara Tointon as victimised wife Bella Manningham, a role vividly portrayed by Ingrid Bergman with an Oscar-winning performance in the 1944 movie.

Leading lady Kara Tointon has had West End stage success, was one of the stars of TV drama Mr Selfridge, won the 2013 series of Strictly Come Dancing and last year played Maria in ITV's The Sound of Music Live! Most recently she has been seen in ITV's new hotel-based wartime drama The Halcyon.

Also appearing in the spooky stage drama set in fog-bound Victorian London is Merlin actor Rupert Young, brother of singer Will, as her husband. Keith Allen plays a detective who makes a shocking discovery. He is a familiar face from stage, film and TV, still perhaps best known as the dastardly Sheriff of Nottingham in TV's Robin Hood. He is also a father of six including pop singer Lily Allen and Game of Thrones star Alfie Allen.

Gaslight starts a UK tour at Birmingham New Alexandra Theatre, where it runs from January 6 to 14, its only Midlands dates.

Bowie tribute close to first anniversary

JUST three days before the first anniversary of David Bowie's death, one of the top Bowie tribute acts, Jean Genie, will be presenting a homage to the influential rock star.

Walsall-based John Mainwaring has been performing his tribute to Bowie for more than 20 years and brings his show to Bilston's Robin 2 venue on Saturday.

Also coming up at the Robin this Friday is Steely Dan tribute Nearly Dan. On Sunday 'space rock' pioneer Nik Turner, former saxophone player with Hawkwind, brings the latest version of Space Ritual to the Mount Pleasant venue.

Band in city music store acoustic set

ROCK band You Me At Six release fifth studio album, Night People, tomorrow (Friday) and fans can get a preview when they appear that day at 5.30pm for an acoustic set and album signing at hmv Birmingham.

A limited edition hmv exclusive picture disc vinyl version of the album will be available on a first come first served basis at the Bullring store. Wristbands will be available by pre-ordering the album from the store, one per person. Any remaining wristbands will be issued on the day for those buying the album.

The band are in concert at Birmingham O2 Academy on April 10.

Jump and jive with King Pleasure

KING Pleasure and the Biscuit Boys' zany stage show sometimes belies the fact that they are one of the finest bands celebrating early rhythm and blues bands to come from outside the USA.

The Brum-based band carries a guarantee of great swinging music and high entertainment value and last year the high-octane jump and jive outfit were spreading their message throughout Europe promoting their 11th CD Live at Last.

King Pleasure and the Biscuit Boys are performing at Artrix Theatre in Bromsgrove on Saturday, then at Bilston's Robin 2 on January 26 with Ricky Cool.

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BBC1



Taboo
(BBC1, 9.15pm)
New series. Historical drama
starring Tom Hardy as
adventurer James Delaney, who
reappears in London in 1814
after being presumed dead in
Africa many years before, and
seeks vengeance for the death
of his father. Set to inherit what
is left of his family's shipping
empire, his arrival not only
threatens to disrupt the plans of
his half-sister Zilpha and her
husband Thorne, but also the
political ambitions of the mighty
East India Company, chaired by
Sir Stuart Strange. Oona
Chaplin, Jefferson Hall and
Jonathan Pryce also star.

7.00 Breakfast. 10.00 Saturday Kitchen Live. **11.30** The Best Dishes Ever. **1.10** 10.00 Football Focus. **1.10** BBC News; **Weather.** **1.15** Live Athletics – Great Edinburgh Cross Country. Coverage from Hong Kong. **2.00** The News from the Country. **2.40** Final Score. **5.20** BBC News. **5.30** Regional Programme. **5.40** Celebrity Mastermind. Famous faces settle into the black chair to answer questions on their chosen subjects. The second round sees the putting of their general knowledge to the test in a bid to carry off the commemorative trophy.

6.10 Pointless Celebrities. Alexander Armstrong and Richard Osman present a Radio 2-themed edition of the wordplay quiz. **6.30** The Big Bang Wholey. Jeremy Vine, Zoe Ball, Michael Ball, Ken Bruce, Anneke Rice, Vanessa Felton and Craig Charles. With a performance by Mika.

7.00 Let's Shine. New series. Talent search to find five performers to play the role of a boy band in a new nationwide touring musical, featuring the music of Take That. In this first episode, the hopefuls audition solo in front of the judging panel, made up of Gary Barlow, Danni Minogue, Martin Kemp and Amber Riley, and perform before a studio audience in Manchester.

8.25 Casually. Dylan becomes the subject of gossip after Seb's allegation, but Max and Jaz are determined to help him and try to record Seb confessing his guilt. Alicia and Ethan wake up together in a blissful happiness, but are forced to face the consequences of their actions, and Connie spots something in Grace's medical notes that leads her to reporting Elle to the GMC.

9.15 Taboo. New series. Historical drama. **9.30** The Day. Gary Linerke as adventurer James Delaney, who appears in London in 1814 after being presumed dead in Africa many years before.

10.10 BBC News; Weather; National Lottery Update.

10.30 Mikel Delfino. Gary Gary Linerke presents highlights from the third round of the FA Cup, including Manchester United v Reading, Everton v Leicester City and Sutton United v AFC Wimbledon.

12.00 Film: The Double. (2011). **1.30** BBC News. **1.45** Weather for the Week Ahead. **1.45** BBC News.

BBC2

0.05 Coast. (R) 6.50 Film: No Minor Victims. (1948) **8.25 Film:** Angels One Five. (1953) **10.00 Secret Britain.** (R) **11.00 Homes Under the Hammer.** (R) **12.00 Exploring China: A Culinary Adventure.** (R) **13.00 Crime & Talking Pictures.** (R) **1.35 Film:** Cimarron. (1960) Western, starring Glenn Ford. **4.00 Mastermind.** (R) **4.30 University Challenge.** (R) **5.00 Only Connect.** (R) **5.30 The World's Most Extraordinary Homes.** (R)

6.30 Thailand: Earth's Tropical Paradise. Exploring the wildlife and culture of the Southeast Asian nation. The first episode examines the south of the country, a popular tourist destination for Westerners, and examines the role of Buddhism in spirituality in daily life. Narrated by Sophie Okonedo. (R)

7.30 Britain's Ancient Capital: Secrets of Orkney. An investigation into how recent archaeological finds on Orkney Island have revealed that Orkney was the cultural capital of Stone Age Britain and the birthplace of the stone circle cult. Chris Packham uncovers the secrets revealed by the DNA of Orkney's ancient people. The presenter explores tombs and monuments, Shini Somara experiments to discover how ancient Orcadians could have moved giant boulders of Orkney granite rough ground, and Andy Torbet climbs a challenging sea-stack to unlock the story of Orkney's unusual geology. (R)

8.30 Dad's Army. With the Walmington-on-Sea Home Guard now established, Captain Mainwaring sets out to try to get equipment for the platoon. (R)

10.30 Bowie: The Last Five Years. A portrait of David Bowie, told by the people who knew him best – his friends and artistic collaborators. It also takes a detailed look at his last years, from his relationship with Blackstar, and his play Lazarus. Through the prism of this last work, the film shows how, in his final five years, Bowie not only began producing music again, but also returned to the core and defining themes of his career. Among the contributors are Tony Visconti, Toni Basil and Michael C Hall. (R)

10.30 Film: The Man Who Fell to Earth. (1976) Nicolas Roeg's sci-fi drama starring David Bowie. (R)

12.45 Film: Walkabout. (1971) **2.20 This Is PB, RNZ.**

ITV

6.00 CITV: Grizzly Tales for Gruesome Kids. (R) **6.25 Dino Dan:** Trek's Adventures. (R) **6.35 Dino Dan:** Trek's Adventures. (R) **6.45 Sooty:** (R) **6.55 Sooty:** (R) **7.00 Sooty:** (R) **7.10 Super 4:** (R) **7.15 Oddbods:** (R) **7.20 Oddbods:** (R) **7.30 Scrambled!:** Scrambled! **7.35 Scrambled!:** Mr Bear: The Animated Series. (R) **7.55 Scrambled!:** Horrible Henry. (R) **8.10 Scrambled!:** Power Rangers. (R) **8.30 Scrambled!:** Bear Grylls Survival School. **9.05 Scrambled!:** Adventure Time. (R) **9.25 ITV News.** **9.30 Thunderbirds Are Go.** **10.00 Rebound:** (R) **11.15 The Big Bang Theory.** **12.00 Bargain Shop Wars.** (R) **12.25 ITV Weather:** **12.30 Judge Rinder:** (R) **1.35 Film:** Kindergarten Cop. (1990) Comedy, starring Arnold Schwarzenegger **3.40 Morecambe and Wise's Funniest Moments:** A Best Of TV programme / **Weather:** **5.45 ITV News:** **Weather.**

6.00 You've Been Framed! Unchained!

7.00 Ninja Warrior UK: Competitors from across the UK test their strength, speed and courage in this obstacle-course challenge, hosted by Ben Shephard. Rochelle Humes and Chris Kamara.

8.00 The Voice UK. New series. The singing contest returns, although things have changed. Much like the spinning chairs at the centre of the show, the former BBC One programme has had a 180-degree turn and is now part of ITV's prime-time Saturday. There are also new coaches as Jennifer Hudson – the US singer and actress who rose to fame on American Idol – and Roz Rossdale, singer and guitarist with rock band Bush – join old hands Will.i.am and Tom Jones. Fans will also be relieved that host Emma Willis has stuck to her guns and stayed over. As usual, things kick off with the blind auditions, in which the coaches sit with their backs to the would-be singers first, selecting the ones they like by vocal ability alone.

9.35 Through the Keyhole. Keith Lemon visits mystery celebrity homes and challenges this week's panel – Fianne Cotton, Will Mellor and Judge Rinder – to guess the personalities of the famous owners.

10.30 ITV News: **Weather.**

10.45 Film: Jaws: The Remake. (1987)

12.25 Jackpot247. 3.00 Who's Doing the Dishes? (R) **3.50 ITV Nightcrash:**

CHANNEL 4

7.15 The King of Queens. (R) **6.40** The King of Queens. (R) **7.00** The King of Queens. (R) **7.25** Everybody Loves Raymond. (R) **7.50** Everybody Loves Raymond. (R) **8.20** Frasier. (R) **8.50** Frasier. (R) **9.20** The Bill Engvall Show. (R) **9.50** The Big Bang Theory. (R) **10.15** The Simpsons. (R) **10.45** The Simpsons. (R) **11.15** The Simpsons. (R) **11.45** A New Life in the Sun. (R) **12.15** 24: Dark Side. BDO Lakeside World Professional Championship. The opening ceremony of the BDO World Championships. **5.30** Speed with Guy Martin. (R)

7.00 **Channel 4 News.**

7.30 **Britain's Favourite TV Detectives.** Documentary seeking to identify Britain's favourite on-screen sleuths. Includes a YouTube poll. These fictional crime-fighters have been a staple of TV schedules for more than half a century, and as the results of the poll count down to reveal the UK's most cherished TV sleuths, the Tricksters, the Bill, Ned and the Rascals, the Inspector, the Redman and Dennis Waterman, Stanley & Hutch's David Soul, and Foyle's War creator Anthony Horowitz discuss the enduring appeal of a good mystery.

9.00 **Film: Ride Along.** (2014) Police officer Taker Callaway persuades his girlfriend's tough detective brother to take him along on duty. The cop hopes to scare his unwanted partner away from his sister by exposing him to danger. But he needs some help when the patrol leads to a run-in with the city's most wanted criminal. Comedy, starring Ice Cube, Kevin Hart and Laurence Fishburne.

10.55 **Film: The Mechanic.** (2011) A solitary hitman teaches his murdered mentor's son the tricks of the trade so they can join forces to seek vengeance. Action thriller remake, starring Jason Statham.

12.45 **Derren Brown: Inhuman.** The illusionist reveals how he can show recorded at the Grand Theatre in Leeds. (R) **2.15** Hollyoaks. Omnibus. Ryan tells Mercedes that he is being blackmailed over their night together, and Tom is guilt-ridden when he hears about Sally's murder. A woman's secrets. **4.40** Shipping Wars. UK, Stu and Emma transport a sailing boat from Cornwall to North Yorkshire. (R) **5.05** Kirstie's Vintage Gems. Creating a romantic bedroom. (R) **5.20** The Restoration Man. George and his team restore a section of water mill in Northumberland. (R)

CHANNEL 5

00 Milkshake! (*R*) 9.55 The Fairly OddParents. (*R*) **10.30 The Hotel Inspector.** (*R*) **11.25 The Hotel Inspector.** (*R*) **12.25 The Hotel Inspector.** (*R*) **1.20 The Hotel Inspector.** (*R*) **2.15 Can't Pay? We'll Take It Away.** (*R*) **3.45 Can't Pay? We'll Take It Away.** (*R*) **4.15 Can't Pay? We'll Take It Away.** (*R*) **5.15 Can't Pay? We'll Take It Away.** (*R*)

6.15 NCIS: Los Angeles. New series. The agents search for Hetty in Rome, Italy, and start looking at Comescu beach house, hoping to confirm she is alive. Real-time episode, starring Chris O'Donnell.

7.05 NCIS: Los Angeles. The CEO of a cyber-company linked to a cyber-attack against the Department of Defense is kidnapped, and Kensi and Deeks go undercover to protect the man's family after fears over their safety. Meanwhile, Callen continues to recover his past.

8.00 NCIS - New Series. The American crime drama following the work of the Naval Criminal Investigative Service returns, as Gibbs fights for his life on board a US Navy hospital ship after being shot. Michael Dinko and Joanna Teague head for Shanghai, where they hope to take down the leaders of the terrorist group known as The Calling. Starring Mark Pellegrino, Michael Weatherly and Mimi Rogers.

8.55 5 News Weekend.

10.00 Celebrity Big Brother. Highlights of the residents' past 24 hours under the all-seeing eye of Big Brother, as they try to get used to their housemates' quirks and foibles while also coping with the day-to-day complications of life inside the house.

10.00 Film: Sex Tape. (2014) Premiere. A couple try to spice up their marriage by filming themselves having sex...but they don't stop anyone from seeing the footage. Comedy, with Cameron Diaz and Jason Segel. Including 5 News Update at 11pm.

11.50 Lip Sync Battle UK: Danny Dyer vs Craig Revel Horwood. Melanie Brown and Simon Cowell will present the musical game show as actor Danny Dyer and dancer Craig Revel Horwood go head to head lip-synching to a hit song. (*R*)

12.15 SuperCanso. **3.10 Celestial Breeze.** (*R*) **4.00 The Money Man.** (2016). (*R*) **5.10 Divine Designs.** (*R*)

DIGITAL

BBC Four

7.00 Why the Industrial Revolution Happened Here 8.00 The Magic of Mushrooms 9.00 Lost Kingdoms of Central America 10.00 The Young Montalbano 11.50 An Evening with Sammi Davis Jr 12.50 Sammi Davis Jr: The Kid in the Middle 1.50 Sings the Great American Songbook 2.55 An Evening with Sammi Davis Jr 3.50 Close

ITV2

11.55 Take Out Celebrity Special 12.55 Ninja Warrior UK 1.55 Film: The Santa Clause 2.55 The Hit Squad 3.00 2.55 FYI David 3.00 Film: The Flintstones in Viva Rock Vegas (2000) 3.45 Film: Cats & Dogs: The Revenge of Kitty Galore (2010) 4.45 FYI David 4.45 4.50 Film: Cats & Dogs: The Revenge of Kitty Galore (2010) 5.45 FYI King Kong (2005) 6.25 FYI David 6.30 Film: King Kong (2005) 9.00 Film: The Bourne Supremacy (2004) 10.00 FYI David 10.05 Film: The Bourne Supremacy (2004) 11.15 Family Guy 12.45 American Dad! 1.40 Dads 2.05 The Hot Chick 2.40 The Hot Chick 3.40 Airline Flack 2.50 Teleshopping 5.50 ITV2

NightScreen

ITV3

11.15 Inspector Morse 6.05 Midsomer Murders 8.00 Doc Martin 9.00 Midsome Murders 11.00 Lewis 1.05 Blue Murder 2.00 ITV3 NightScreen 2.30

ITV4

11.00 Film: Shalako (1968) 12.10 FYI David 12.15 Film: Shalako (1968) 1.20 Sporting Funnies 1.30 ITV Racing Live from Sandown. Coverage of races from Sandown and Wincanton. 4.00 Pawn Stars 5.00 The Hot Desk 6.00 Jokers Wild 9.00 Film: Cliffhanger (1993) 10.00 FYI David 10.05 Film: Cliffhanger (1993) 11.15 Film: On Deadly Ground (1994) 12.15 FYI David 12.20 Film: On Deadly Ground (1994) 1.20 Minder 2.20 Tommy Cooper 2.45 TV NightScreen

E4

11.00 Black-125 12.00 Film: A Monster in Paris (2011) 1.45 Rude (sh) Tube Shorts 2.20 The Goldbergs 4.00 Brooklyn Nine-Nine 5.00 The Big Bang Theory 6.00 Film: Speed (1994) 11.20 Gogglebox 1.30 Rude Tube: Welcome to 1971 3.25 Neighbours 4.10 Suburgatory 4.55 Revenge

Film4

11.00 Thunderbirds Are Go! (1966) 1.10 The Family Stone (2005) 3.35 Fast Girls (2012) 4.50 Young Sherlock Holmes (1985) 7.00 Volcano (1997) 9.00 The Hungry Marsters: Catching Fire (2013) 11.30 The Hungry Marsters: Catching Fire (2013) 11.30 The Hungry Marsters: Catching Fire (2013)

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CHOICE



Ashley Banjo (left)

Dance Dance Dance (ITV, 6.30pm)
New series. Alesha Dixon and Will Best host a celebrity dance contest. The show features five famous contestants, who are unconfirmed at the time of going to press, each of whom will be paired with a dance partner. The couples will take on the challenge of recreating iconic dance routines featured in movies or music videos. Ashley Banjo, leader of street dance troupe Diversity, and choreographers Tina Landon and Timor Steffens make up the panel of expert judges who will be assessing their talents on the dance floor.

BBC1

6.00 Breakfast. **7.30** MOTD: FA Cup Highlights. (R) **9.00** The Andrew Marr Show. **10.00** The Big Questions. **11.00** Homes Under the Hammer. (R) **12.00** Bargain Hunt. (R) **1.00** BBC News: Weather. **1.15** Songs of Praise. **1.50** Escape to the Country. (R) **2.35** Life in the Snow. (R) **3.35** Match of the Day Live: The FA Cup. Tottenham Hotspur v Aston Villa (Kick-off 4.00pm). **6.05** BBC News. **6.20** Regional Programme. **6.30** Countryfile. Matt Baker examines how the Shropshire landscape has been shaped by the history of mining, and Anita Rani visits a camping site that has been set up in a scrap yard. Adam Henson presents the first in a series of reports from New Zealand. Charlotte Smith examines a rise in dementia in rural communities, and chef Michael Caines goes camping in Dartmoor. Including weather for the week ahead. **7.30** Antiques Roadshow. Fiona Bruce presents a second visit to Tewkesbury Abbey in Gloucestershire. The experts examine a heavy Tudor table that requires six men to move it, an extensive collection of Maundy money, a signed picture of Chairman Mao by Andy Warhol, and a rare 18th-century painted silk dress that has been left in a dressing up box for 50 years. **8.30** Still Open All Hours. Eric, Cyril and Mr Newbold try to prove they have it in them to be exciting, while Granville tries to shift a consignment of mints that are past their sell by date. **9.00** Sherlock. The detective faces a dangerous new enemy in the seemingly unassailable Culverton Smith, a man whose position of power conceals a terrible secret. Estranged from John, Sherlock must confront his demons to defeat his enemy's plans. Toby Jones guest stars as the villain. **10.30** BBC News. **10.50** Regional Programme. **11.00** MOTD: FA Cup Highlights. A review of the latest third-round matches, featuring Tottenham Hotspur v Aston Villa and Liverpool v Plymouth Argyle or Newport County. **12.05** The Celebrity Apprentice USA. **1.30** Weather for the Week Ahead. **1.35** BBC News.

BBC2

6.10 A to Z of TV Gardening. (R) **6.55** Big Dreams Small Spaces. (R) **7.55** An Island Parish. (R) **8.25** The Edible Garden. (R) **8.55** Countryfile. (R) **9.55** Saturday Kitchen Best Bites. **11.25** The Good Cook. (R) **11.55** Tom Kerridge's Proper Pub Food. (R) **12.25** Richard Harris: Talking Pictures. (R) **1.00** Film: Cromwell. (1970) Historical drama, starring Richard Harris and Alec Guinness. **3.15** Flog It! (R) **4.15** Life in Polar Bear Town with Gordon Buchanan. (R) **5.15** Yellowstone: The Wildest Winter. (R) **6.15** Ski Sunday. All the news, gossip and action from the piste. **7.00** School Swap: Korea Style. Part one of two. Three teenagers from Pembrokeshire swap their classrooms, teachers and parents for a school in South Korea, which boasts one of the best education systems in the world – and one of the toughest. For three days, they live and breathe Korean education to find out the secret to its success. Can they hack it? Sian Griffiths presents. **8.00** Dragons' Den. Evan Davis presents the business ideas contest, with panellists Deborah Meaden, Peter Jones, Touker Suleyman, Sarah Willingham and Nick Jenkins examining the profit-making potential of inflatable igloos, a restaurant serving meat-free hot dogs, and a new kind of pooper-scooper. Presented by Evan Davis. **9.00** Thailand: Earth's Tropical Paradise. Exploring the forests, plains and bustling cities of Central Thailand, an area known as the nation's rice bowl. The programme explores how people live alongside animals in these areas, and the spiritual fulfilment to be found in these relationships. Narrated by Sophie Okonedo. **10.00** Film: A Most Violent Year. (2014) Premiere. An immigrant living in New York in 1981 struggles to keep his business going against an unrelenting rise in violent crime. Thriller, with Oscar Isaac and Jessica Chastain. **12.00** Ol XL. With Phill Jupitus, Holly Walsh and Nish Kumar. **12.45** Sign Zone: Countryfile. Anita Rani visits Malham Cove in the Yorkshire Dales, where she climbs a cliff face and meets an artist pursuing a family tradition. (R) **1.45** Holby City. (R) **2.40** This Is BBC Two. Preview of upcoming programmes.

ITV

6.00 CITV: Grizzly Tales for Gruesome Kids. **6.10** Grizzly Tales for Gruesome Kids. (R) **6.25** Dino Dan: Trek's Adventures. (R) **6.35** Dino Dan: Trek's Adventures. (R) **6.50** Sooty. (R) **6.55** Signed Stories: Share a Story. (R) **7.00** Super 4. (R) **7.15** Oddbods. (R) **7.30** Scrambled!: Scrambled! **7.35** Scrambled!: Mr Bean: The Animated Series. (R) **7.55** Scrambled!: Horrid Henry. (R) **8.10** Scrambled!: The Powerpuff Girls. (R) **8.30** Scrambled!: Thunderbirds Are Go. **9.05** Scrambled!: Adventure Time. (R) **9.25** ITV News. **9.30** Film: Carry On Up the Jungle. (1970) **11.15** Chopping Block. (R) **12.15** ITV News. **12.25** Signing Point. (R) **1.25** Ninja Warrior UK. (R) **2.30** The Voice UK. (R) **4.00** The Big Soap Quiz: Coronation Street vs Emmerdale. (R) **5.00** Regional Programme. **5.15** ITV News. **5.30** Unbelievable Moments Caught on Camera. Alastair Stewart presents a selection of extraordinary eyewitness footage filmed by members of the public, featuring a wedding that was ruined by a sandstorm, the rescue of a fox cub from a drain, cyclists being chased by an ostrich, a train that crashed into a truck at a level crossing, a paraglider's painful crash landing, and a musical moment that raised thousands for charity and started an 80-year-old grandfather's recording career. **6.30** Dance Dance Dance. New series. Alesha Dixon and Will Best host a dance contest in which celebrities recreate famous routines from movies and music videos to impress a panel of expert judges. **8.00** Endeavour. New series. In the summer of 1967, Morse and Thursday are both devastated by Joan's abrupt departure from Oxford. The young detective responds to his loss by throwing himself into his work, investigating the suspicious drowning of a scientist who was part of a research team working on an early computer. At first it appears to be a simple suicide – until two more bodies are found in the river. **10.00** ITV News: Weather. **10.15** Robson Crusoe: A Surprising Adventure. Inspired by Daniel Defoe's classic novel Robinson Crusoe, cameras follow actor and presenter Robson Green as he fends for himself on a desert island in the South China Sea. (R) **11.10** Premiership Rugby Union. **12.05** Jackpot247. **3.00** Chopping Block. (R) **3.50** ITV Nightscreen.

CHANNEL 4

6.15 The King of Queens. (R) **6.40** The King of Queens. (R) **7.05** The King of Queens. (R) **7.30** Everybody Loves Raymond. (R) **7.55** Everybody Loves Raymond. (R) **8.25** Frasier. (R) **9.00** Frasier. (R) **9.30** Sunday Brunch. **12.30** Darts: BDO Lakeside World Professional Championships. The second day of the BDO World Championships. **5.30** Find It, Fix It, Flog It. (R) **6.15** Channel 4 News. **6.30** Britain's Wildest Weather 2016. Footage of unusual weather conditions recorded in Britain during 2016, and exploring the factors that led to these incidents. The programme features footage recorded by people caught in the middle of floods, super-storms, tornadoes and lightning strikes, as well as a look at how a record level El Niño effect altered Britain's weather. (R) **8.00** Walking the Americas. New series. Levison Wood goes on a four-month trek across Central America, travelling 1,800 miles from Mexico to Colombia. The journey begins in Mexico's Yucatan Peninsula, where he and his guide Alberto explore the remains of the Mayan Civilisation, including a sinkhole containing the remains of sacrificial victims. They move on to the island of San Pedro and the jungles where Levison was trained as a soldier, before braving the lawless wilderness of El Peten in Guatemala, where most of America's cocaine is trafficked. **9.00** Film: The Hunger Games: Mockingjay – Part 1. (2014) Premiere. Katniss Everdeen is brought to a secretive underground society following the destruction of the televised deathmatch. She becomes the figurehead of a revolution against the despotic Panem regime, while her friend Peeta remains a captive of his tyrannical president. Part one of the two-part conclusion to the sci-fi adventure series, starring Jennifer Lawrence. **11.20** The Big Fat Quiz of Everything. Jonathan Ross, David Walliams, Katherine Ryan, Aisling Bea, Noel Fielding and Richard Ayoade answer Jimmy Carr's questions on the past 100,000 years of human history. (R) **1.25** How to Lose Weight Well. (R) **2.25** The Secret Life of a Year Olds. (R) **3.15** The Autistic Gardener. (R)

CHANNEL 5

6.00 Milkshake!: Milkshake! Monkey. **6.05** Milkshake! Bop Box. (R) **6.10** Peppa Pig. (R) **6.15** Bob the Builder. (R) **6.25** Wanda and the Alien. (R) **6.35** Zack and Quack. (R) **6.50** Seaside Antics. (R) **6.55** Fireman Sam. (R) **7.10** Pip Ahoy! (R) **7.30** Little Princess. (R) **7.45** Big Bash Cricket Live. Hobart Hurricanes v Melbourne Stars. **11.30** Cats Make You Laugh Out Loud 3. (R) **12.30** Film: Holy Man. (1998) Satirical comedy, starring Eddie Murphy. **2.35** Film: The Kid. (2000) Disney comedy, starring Bruce Willis. **4.35** Film: Legally Blonde. (2001) Comedy, starring Reese Witherspoon. **6.25** Film: Along Came Polly. (2004) An obsessively cautious man, whose wife left him on their honeymoon, crosses paths with a wildly spontaneous former classmate who throws his well-ordered routine into disarray. Yet in spite of their different outlooks on life, he starts to fall for her. Romantic comedy, starring Ben Stiller, Jennifer Aniston, Debra Messing, Hank Azaria, Alec Baldwin and Philip Seymour Hoffman. Edited for language and sexual content. **8.00** Kittens Make You Laugh Out Loud. Compilation of internet videos featuring kittens doing bizarre and humorous things. **8.55** 5 News Weekend. **9.00** Celebrity Big Brother. A chance to catch up with the latest events inside the house as the celebrities cope with living under constant surveillance, with all the arguments and alliances, as well as the revelations in the diary room. **10.00** Celebrity Botched Up Bodies. Leading surgeons repair household names damaged by cosmetic surgery. **11.05** The BAFTA Britannia Awards 2016. Coverage of the movie awards ceremony, with Jodie Foster, Ricky Gervais, Ang Lee, Samuel L. Jackson, Felicity Jones and Ewan McGregor among those receiving honours. **1.00** SuperCasino. Live interactive gaming. **3.10** A New Life in Oz. British families emigrating to Australia. (R) **4.00** Now That's Funny! Internet-sourced videos with an amusing family friendly hook. (R) **4.50** Divine Designs. (R) **5.40** Angels of Jarm. The children make cards. (R) **5.50** Roary the Racing Car. (R)

DIGITAL

BBC Four
7.00 David Starkey's Music & Monarchy
8.00 Sword, Musket & Machine Gun: Britain's Armed History **9.00** Horizon: The Trouble with Space Junk **10.00** The Sky at Night **10.30** Film: Venus in Fur (2013) **12.00** Killer Whales: Beneath the Surface – Natural World **1.00** The Magic of Mushrooms **2.00** Lost Kingdoms of Central America **3.00** Boxing at the Movies: Kings of the Ring **4.00** Close ITV2
11.30 The Voice UK **1.00** 2Awesome: 2Awesome **1.05** 2Awesome: Guidance **1.40** 2Awesome: Side Effects **2.20** 2Awesome: Third Wheel **2.40** 2Awesome: LA Story **3.00** Film: Nanny McPhee (2005) **4.00** FYI Daily **4.05** Film: Nanny McPhee (2005) **5.00** Minion Madness **5.10** Film: Despicable Me 2 (2013) **6.10** FYI Daily **6.15** Film: Despicable Me 2 (2013) **7.15** Film: The Amazing Spider-Man 2 (2014) **8.15** FYI Daily **8.20** Film: The Amazing Spider-Man 2 (2014) **10.00** Family Guy **10.55** American Dad! **12.25** The Cleveland Show **1.25** Release the Hounds **2.15** Teleshopping **5.45** ITV2 Nightscreen
ITV4
8.00 This Time Next Year **9.00** Tonight at the London Palladium **10.00** Birds of a Feather **10.30** Inspector Morse **12.50** A Touch of Frost **2.30** Wycliffe **3.30** May the Best House Win **5.15** You're Only Young Twice **5.40** ITV3 Nightscreen
ITVA
11.40 Pawn Stars **1.30** Film: Apache (1954) **2.35** FYI Daily **2.40** Film: Apache (1954) **3.20** Film: Red River (1948) **4.25** FYI Daily **4.30** Film: Red River (1948) **6.00** Film: 633 Squadron (1964) **7.05** FYI Daily **7.10** Film: 633 Squadron (1964) **8.00** Premiership Rugby Union **9.00** Film: The Krays (1990) **10.05** FYI Daily **10.10** Film: The Krays (1990) **11.30** Film: Don't Say a Word (2001) **12.35** FYI Daily **12.40** Film: Don't Say a Word (2001) **1.45** Hell on Wheels
E4
3.00 The Big Bang Theory **6.30** The Big Bang Theory: Hawking's 75th Birthday **9.00** Film: Bullet to the Head (2012) **10.50** Tattoo Fixers **11.55** Virtually Famous **12.45** Gogglebox **1.50** Rude Tube: Love Bytes **2.45** Rude Tube **3.15** New Girl **3.35** Hollyoaks
Film4
11.00 The Great St Trinian's Train Robbery (1966) **1.00** The Spy Next Door (2010) **2.50** The Two Faces of January (2014) **4.45** Mission: Impossible (1996) **6.55** The Jane Austen Book Club (2007) **9.00** The Railway Man (2013)

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FILM CHOICES

MONDAY

Unwanted Guest, Channel 5, 3.15pm

With nowhere to go for winter break, Amy is invited to spend time with her friend Christine's family. What begins as a nice bonding experience soon turns into a nightmare as Amy begins to lash out at her welcoming hosts. Thriller, starring Kate Mansi and Valentina Novakovic. (2016)

TUESDAY

Dangerous Lessons, Channel 5, 3.15pm

A high school teacher breaks the cardinal rule of not getting romantically involved with one of her students. However, when she tells him it's over, the boy begins to demonstrate psychotic, obsessive behaviour, and starts to stalk both her and her family. Thriller, starring Louise Lombard and Alex Esola. (2016)

WEDNESDAY

The Other Man, BBC1, 11.45pm

After his wife's death, a man learns she was having an affair when he discovers provocative photos of her with another man. He resolves to track down her lover and exact his revenge, but when he confronts the man about his misdeeds, he instead strikes up an unlikely friendship, making him question whether he should continue with his vengeful scheme. Drama, starring Liam Neeson and Antonio Banderas. (2008)



The Other Man, Wednesday, BBC1, 11.45pm

THURSDAY

A Mother's Fear, Channel 5, 3.15pm

A single mother resolves to discover the cause of her son's mysterious illness. Her investigation leads her to a corporation involved in genetically modified food and two scientists who are on the verge of a groundbreaking new discovery. Drama, starring Zoe Lister-Jones, Danny Glover and Victor Garber. (2015)

FRIDAY

Sexy Beast, Channel 4, 12.10am

A retired safe-breaker enjoying the high life in Spain becomes the target of unwanted attention when his psychotic former gangland boss comes looking to enlist his help and expertise for a major bank robbery in London. Crime thriller, starring Ray Winstone, Ben Kingsley, Ian McShane and Amanda Redman. (2000)

New series is hoping to be a Class above

Sometimes it's hard to be a Doctor Who fan...

The past 12 months have been particularly difficult thanks to the fact that no full series of the much-loved drama had headed our way. Instead, we've had to make do with the Christmas special, which was a lot of fun, but it's just not the same as having several adventures spread over a couple of months to get your teeth into.

However, one little ray of sunshine was the appearance of Class, a spin-off available on BBC Three. Sadly, there are some of us who still can't get to the grips of watching programmes online, or who don't have the technology to watch it via our TVs, so we feel we've missed out.

Thankfully, the Beeb has deemed it worthy of a proper, terrestrial broadcast, so three cheers for them.

Of course, it isn't the first time a Whovian spin-off has featured in the schedules. Way back in 1981 we were treated to K-9 and Company, in which former companion Sarah

Jane Smith (Elisabeth Sladen) was meant to embark on adventures with the Time Lord's popular robot dog. Unfortunately, it turned out to be a lacklustre affair that didn't get past the pilot stage.

Sladen returned in The Sarah Jane Adventures 26 years later, and that was a success, running for five series until the actress's death in 2011.

And then there was Torchwood, a far more grown-up approach to sci-fi, which ran for four years; fans were devastated when it came to an end and long for it to return. It has, after a fashion, via Big Finish, a company that produces Doctor Who audio adventures. The company has also backed other spin-offs featuring characters from the series.

Class may one day be a project for them too, but for now, it's a visual feast written by young adult writer Patrick Ness, who said of the series before its first air date in October: "There are many, many secrets to come. Many. Like, a lot. But of course, the Doctor is in episode one! That's how these things are done.

"Truly, though, I can't wait for everyone to see the show; we've worked so hard and I'm so proud of it."

Peter Capaldi added: "The Doctor Who family is growing, and it's fantastic to be able to welcome the young new cast of Class in to the Whoniverse."

The main setting for the drama is Coal Hill Academy, which long-standing fans will be aware has been part of Doctor Who since its earliest days – it featured in the very first episode, An Unearthly Child, back in 1963, when it was known as Coal Hill School and was attended by the Doctor's granddaughter, Susan. It's appeared since too – it's the school where Clara Oswald was a teacher.

Now it's Miss Quill (played by Katherine Kelly) who takes centre stage, along with four students who are entrusted by the Doctor to keep alive threats at bay.

Fun and lively, it's a must for Whovians of all ages.



Sophie Hopkins and Greg Austin star, Class, Monday, BBC1, 10.45pm

BEST OF THE REST

MONDAY

The Halcyon

ITV, 9pm

Lady Hamilton wants Freddie to use his leave from the RAF to support her with the hotel and it becomes clear she with make changed and that Garland is in her sights. The hotel manager insists he's not worried and that he just needs to show how indispensable he is, but Peggy and Feldman aren't sure, while Charity meets Joe and reveals her plans for revenge, but he refuses to help her, and Emma and Betsy hit the town. Drama, starring Olivia Williams, Steven Mackintosh, Jamie Blackley and Mark Benton.

TUESDAY

Sugar Free Farm

ITV, 9pm

Seven celebrities submit to a diet free from sugar, refined carbs, processed fats and cheap meat. From the moment they take up residence in a farmworkers' cottage, they're put to work to earn all the healthy food they eat. TV presenter Alison Hammond cooks from scratch with natural ingredients, comedian Joe Pasquale discovers an aptitude for pig husbandry, and ex MP Ann Widdecombe overcomes an aversion to whole grains. However, while Peter Davison, Stavros

Flatley are also put through their paces, reality star Gemma Collins has trouble handling the farm work.

WEDNESDAY

Hospital

BBC2, 9pm

New series. A six-part series capturing the day-to-day realities that face the NHS in unprecedented times. With an ever-increasing demand on its various services, the programme shows the real-life dilemmas and tough decisions that hospital staff and patients alike have to endure. In the first episode, two patients await life-saving surgery at St Mary's Hospital in Paddington - both need to be in the intensive card ward, but the hospital is at full capacity and there is only one bed remaining.

Common Sense

BBC2, 10pm

New series. Topical, fast-paced comedy news series voiced by Ruth Jones, featuring a regular cast of real British people, including dinner ladies from Leeds, East End market traders, supermarket co-workers, launderette owners and butchers from Birmingham. Chosen for their

sharp wit and humorous take on life, the cast offer their honest and unfiltered thoughts on some of the biggest talking points of the week, from major breaking stories and bizarre headlines, to the worlds of sport and popular culture.

THURSDAY

Spy in the Wild

BBC1, 8pm

New series. Natural history documentary in which spy cameras camouflaged as various animals go 'undercover' in the animal world, getting up close and personal to film their behaviour. Spy Pup is immersed in wild dog life to explore their maternal love, and Spy Penguin records the turbulent action of the mating season, as a male Adelle penguin falls victim to a pebble thief that ruins his chances of love for the season. Spy Tortoise and Spy Bushbaby keep

Sugar Free Farm, Tuesday, ITV, 9pm

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FOR so many people, quality, locally-sourced food is high on the priority list when they are thinking about where to stay.

Cue Bodnant Welsh Food Centre and Cookery School in North Wales, helping the country to establish its growing reputation as a nation of passionate producers and fanatical foodies.

Situated just a stone's throw from the sea-side town of Conwy, the centre was established in 2012 to provide the showcase for the best Welsh food such as fresh meat from the local valleys and hills.

It is set in a cluster of stone farm buildings dating back to the 18th century, which have been lovingly restored to house a host of businesses, all of which champion the best products from the local area.

On site is a farm shop, selling products sourced from the surrounding Bodnant estate, from award-winning Welsh suppliers and the in-house bakery, butchers and dairy. This food is also used to supply the elegant on-site Hay-

By James Pugh

loft Restaurant, intimate River Room and Furnace Tea Room. My wife and I stayed in one of the five on-site bedrooms, which boast stunning views over the Conwy Estuary.

The comfortable accommodation has been finished with stylish furnishings, ironwork lights and Welsh handmade fabrics as well as the usual mod cons. It also benefits from an impressive communal kitchen and living room. Staying over is an excellent excuse to make use of both the Hayloft and River Room, where chefs make the best possible use of Bodnant's ingredients.

The menu is changed regularly to suit the seasons and boasts generous portions. Typical dishes in the Hayloft include a 'festival of Welsh lamb', 'soused Llandudno mackerel' and 'peaches and Bodnant ice cream' – all reasonably priced and served with wines from Bodnant's own cellar.

Alternatively, The River Room restaurant offers an intimate and informal fine dining experience with a unique seven-course tast-

ing menu, each course refined and carefully selected by Andrew Sheridan. The restaurant, which provides a fine dining experience for just 12 guests per evening, was the brainchild of Mr Sheridan. It was this we got the pleasure of sampling during our stay.

Each dish was immaculately presented and bursting with flavours, including the mackerel and wood pigeon which I had never tried before. The mix of pre-chosen white and red wines, optional with the tasting menu, accompanied the main dishes perfectly.

Ambition

Mr Sheridan, who has trained alongside Michelin-starred chef Michael Caines, said: "The River Room was the realisation of a personal ambition to make fine dining more accessible to people. I passionately believe that everyone should have the opportunity to experience top quality food."

"The idea behind The River Room is to combine fine dining with an informal atmosphere. There is absolutely no pretence here – guests don't need to worry about wearing a formal jacket or which cutlery to choose."

Just like the food, the service was first-class, with the knowledgeable waiter introducing each dish and wine.

Breakfast the following morning in the Hayloft restaurant was equally appetising. The venue also boasts a function room for weddings and other events and the Welsh National Bee-keeping Centre – as well as its impressive Cookery School, which again promotes local ingredients.

Courses tie in with what is in season, catering for just what you fancy all around the year, with classes varying from bread-making to tapas fusion, skilled patisserie and dinner party dishes. Bodnant's sessions come highly recommended for chefs of all levels – and would certainly make an ideal gift for a food enthusiast.

For those seeking a little more adventure, there is plenty of exploration to be done in the rugged local landscape of Snowdonia, a sanctuary for outdoors enthusiasts and adventure seekers. Situated in quiet estate surroundings, in the heart of Conwy Valley, the Bodnant Welsh Food Centre offers something for everyone.

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Car is still near top of shopping list

By Ian Donaldson

YOU can't knock Mazda for its honesty. Lined up side by side were the latest version of the company's midrange hatch and the model it replaces.

And both editions of the Mazda3 looked all but identical to the untrained eye. To the trained eye too, come to that.

And Mazda agrees, citing 'minor tweaks' on the outside, amounting to little more than a different radiator grille and lights at the front and a bit more body coloured panelling round the back, instead of plainer black plastic.

Inside, the changes run a little deeper, with smarter plastics on dash and doors. An electric parking brake replaces the older manual lever – but nobody uses either these days, do they?

All versions of the new Mazda3 – available with two diesel and two petrol engines and in two body styles, Hatchback and (booted saloon) Fastback – are now quieter than before, thanks to added sound deadening and reduced knocking noises from cold or at low speed from the diesels.

Dig deeper and you discover Mazda has been clever with the electronics, devising something called G-Vectoring Control, which minutely varies the power going to the front, driven wheels to keep the car tracking straighter, to the benefit of both feel at the wheel and passenger head-nodding comfort.

Without an older car to try on the same bits of Scottish blacktop chosen for the car's press launch, it was of course impossible to know how well this clever tech works. Ditto, how much quieter the newer model has become.



Smarter plastics on dash and doors

Happily, that is no real problem. The Mazda3 in its old guise was one of the best cars in its class, bringing the fight to the likes of the Ford Focus and VW Golf.

And it still is, with a continuing winning combination of good looks, decent performance allied to sometimes outstanding economy and a lot of kit for your money.

Talking of which, the new car costs £200 more than before, which will make almost no impact on your monthly payments.

The vast majority of Mazda3s are sold as hatchbacks, which cost the same as their saloon siblings but are considered a mite more practical thanks to the big rear hatch, opening to reveal a sensibly sized boot beneath.

Most of them will have petrol engines because most of this line of Mazdas are sold to private buyers, who don't reckon the £1,500 price hike to a diesel is worth it for the extra economy when they're not doing business user mileages.

Prices of the new range start at £17,595



There have been minor tweaks on the outside of the new Mazda3

for a 2.0 litre SKYACTIV-G petrol SE Nav, which rather confusingly comes without satellite navigation, available for £600. It does come with 16ins alloy wheels, manual air conditioning, DAB radio, electric windows all round and heated and power folding door mirrors.

Move to SEL-Nav, from £19,695, and you add parking sensors, heated front seats, cruise control, climate control and city brake support that brakes for you if you're not

concentrating and can stop the car before it hits something.

Top of the Mazda3 tree is the Sport Nav line, from £20,645, which brings 18ins alloys, LED headlights, digital speedometer, keyless entry and a Bose nine speaker sound system.

The two 2.0 litre petrol engines produce 120 or 150 horsepower, with the diesels, of 1.5 or 2.2 litres managing 105 and 150 horsepower respectively. Automatic transmission is available on some petrol and diesel models

for £1,200. Trying the likely biggest seller, a hatchback 120hp petrol version revealed a car that feels as nimble on its pins as something from a smaller class of car and which tackled Scotland's bonny braes with something close to enthusiasm, helped along by a forgiving ride and gearchange that might have been lifted from the MX-5 sports car.

This gentle reworking of Mazda's mid-ranger keeps the car near the head of anyone's shopping list.



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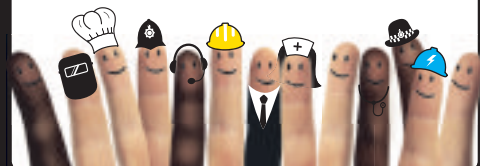
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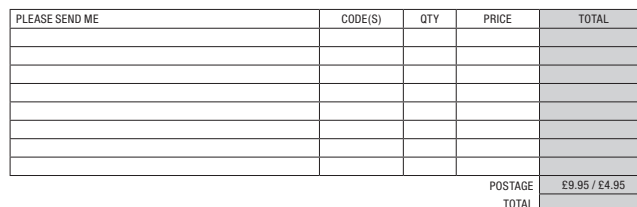
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Billy Palmer, Dominic Price and Henry Hardwick celebrate success



Training in the 'progressive' and 'safe' martial art



Students go through warm up exercises at Erasmus Darwin Academy



Sean Hardwick who runs the Cannock & Burntwood Taekwondo Club

Martial arts club fighting fit for nearly 20 years

CANNOCK & Burntwood Taekwondo Club is thriving at its nears 20 years in operation. The club, which operates from schools in Cannock and Burntwood, continues to provide a hub for training world-class athletes and beginners in the martial art.

Master Sean Hardwick has been running the club since 1997, putting on sessions for children and adults of all abilities at Cannock Chase High School and Erasmus Darwin Academy in Chasetown.

Hardwick, who has trained in several disciplines for over 40 years, said: "Taekwondo is quite a progressive martial art, and it's a safe art as well."

Earned

"I run adult classes and then do classes for children as well, going from beginners to those who are going to a lot of competitions."

He added: "A lot of martial arts clubs are dying out in this day and age but I reckon there are around 150 children I teach, and around 70 adults."

"When I started out, all I wanted to do was teach adults but you get more enrichment from teaching the children – it's really big for them and you get a massive boost from seeing them do well."

Now a sixth degree black belt, Hardwick got his first taste of martial arts when he took up judo.

He earned the grade of seventh kyu and had a brief period practising karate before moving on to boxing – he stayed at Wolverhampton ABA, based at Willenhall Road until 1984.

A year prior to leaving ABA he got involved with

SPORTING FEATURE

By Joe Edwards

"You get more enrichment from teaching the children – it's really big for them and you get a massive boost from seeing them do well."

taekwondo, and has never looked back. Judo was the first thing and it went through to taekwondo," said Hardwick. "I started taekwondo in Cannock back in 1983."

"I started competing internationally and then took the club over. When I took over, there were 17 students. It is very, very popular now."

"I am doing four lessons a night, four days a week and then it tends to be competitions over the weekend."

"I like to spread four sessions over one night and get them all there and involved. I have some assistant instructors who help me out with it all as well."

Hardwick runs sessions on four nights every week – Mondays and Wednesdays at Erasmus Darwin Academy, Pool Road, and Tuesdays and Thursdays at Cannock Chase High, Hednesford Road.

The nights are typically split into four different categories, with beginner classes for children running from 5.30 until 6.15pm.

An advanced class for children will then go until

7pm, with adults of a mixed ability then going through until 8pm. A session of extra sparring and training lasts until 8.30.

The club had a group of students find success on the big stage over the summer, with Billy Palmer, Dominic Price and Henry Hardwick – Sean's son – among those claiming medals at the TAGB World Championships.

The competition was held at the Barclaycard Arena in Birmingham and there were 3,700 competitors from more than 40 countries.

Palmer, aged 17, claimed gold medals in black belt middleweight sparring, individual and team.

Price, 11, also managed golds in yellow belt middleweight – both individual sparring – while Hardwick took silver in black belt heavyweight.

Progress

"Every single big tournament we have been at we have had world champions," said Hardwick. "The three lads who did so well at the last one have all been with me since the age of five, so I have seen them progress and work to become the top-class athletes they are now."

"Billy Palmer is 17 and we have got really high hopes for him. Of course, taekwondo is an Olympic sport so you could not rule it out – him being there one day."

"The next big competition is the British Championships at the Derby Velodrome and we have got plenty going down there and having a go."

Hardwick readily admits taekwondo is a huge part of his life and added: "My wife's a black belt, my children have black belts – it is very much a family thing."

For more information on the club, visit www.taekwondo.uk.net



Club members during sparring at Cannock & Burntwood Taekwondo Club, Erasmus Darwin Academy



Youngsters are put through their paces during the training sessions run by Sean Hardwick



Eggington's in talks over title challenge

STOURBRIDGE'S Sam Eggington is set to be handed his next big title opportunity after being made the mandatory challenger for the European welterweight belt.

Eggington hinted at the chance on social media as his promoter Eddie Hearn bids to secure the chance for him in the new year.

He took to Twitter to say: "Just had some brilliant news! The new year is gonna bring big fights and big title."

The European Boxing Union have already ordered new champion Ceferino Rodriguez to defend against 'the Savage' and revealed both parties are in "private negotiations."

Rodriguez, who is co-promoted by former two-weight world champion Sergio Martinez, claimed the vacant strap on December 2.

Homeland

The 28-year-old defeated Frenchman Ahmed El Mousaoui on a points split decision in his homeland of Gran Canaria, Spain.

Hearn and his Matchroom Boxing team are hoping to get Eggington the fight on British soil, possibly even at the Barclaycard Arena in Birmingham. They plan to return there in the spring.

Eggington, aged 23, is back on track after claiming WBC International honours and the scalp of Brummie Frankie Gavin – a former European title challenger – by eighth round TKO in October.

The former British and Commonwealth titlist previously relinquished his belts when he was outpointed by Bradley Skeete in March.

Both fights took place in Birmingham, at the Genting Arena and Barclaycard respectively, with box office takings thought to be more favourable at the latter.

Dwyer comes full circle to join the Heathens revamp

CRADLEY Heathens have added Conor Dwyer as their latest new signing in a big team revamp.

Dwyer joins from hometown club Coventry on a 4.05 average and joins Tom Perry, Danny Ayres, Dan Greenwood, Joe Lawlor and Ryan Burton.

He admits he's always kept a keen interest in the club since spending time as part of their pit crew when he reformed.

"When I first got into speedway around 2010/11, I used to be mechanic for their former rider Richard Franklin," he said. "I used to look out at the crowds and think 'wow, I'd love to race in front of a crowd like that every week.'"

"Everything has come full circle since then and all these years on it's happened and I can't wait to get started."

He added: "Monmore Green is a track I really enjoy racing on and I have done so many laps because of the second halves after Wolves' Elite League meetings so I already know my way around there."

"I think it's going to be a big, exciting year for Cradley."

Will shows way to high-level success

A CRADLEY Heath student is celebrating an incredible year in which he played hockey at the highest level.

Will Hall, aged 17, of Rowley Regis, is a pupil at Ormiston Forge Academy and plays in goal. He began the year by being selected to attend an Advanced Level Apprenticeship in Sporting Excellence (AASE) Academy run by England Hockey in conjunction with Loughborough College.

He was also selected for assessment for the u-18 National Age Group Squads (NAGS), one of highest honours a junior hockey player can attain.

Based on observations and feedback from coaches, Will was invited to a development day

Hockey

with England Hockey. Being part of the squad gave the A-Level student access to high-performance coaching in team play, small unit play, set pieces, tournament play and individual technical coaching.

He was also given advice and training in nutrition, injury management, lifestyle, psychology and anti-doping.

As part of the u-18 squad, Will attended the Sainsbury School Games, held at Loughborough University in September as well as the 'Joint Re-

gional Performance Centre' trials, for a place in the Mercia regional team, to play in the competition. Will was selected to play for Mercia Lynx, one of the four regional teams in the Hockey Futures Cup. This is the selection process for the full England u-18 squad, which Will hopes to break into.

During the cup competition he played four halves of hockey and saved every penalty corner directed at him as well as a penalty stroke.

Ormiston Forge Academy principal Andrew Burns said: "We are all incredibly proud of Will. His achievements show how committed and talented he is."

IDEAL WARM-UP FOR CUP CLASH

Barwell 0 Stourbridge 1
STOURBRIDGE warmed up for their big FA Cup clash at Wycombe this weekend by stretching their unbeaten run to seven league matches.

Monday's 1-0 win over Barwell came courtesy of Jack Duggan, hero of the Glassboys' FA Cup second round win over Northampton Town.

The visitors had chances to extend their lead as the home side pushed for an equaliser, but the backline defended valiantly to hold on for a clean sheet.

Barwell came into the match in a good run of form themselves, having lost just one in their previous eight league matches.

Gary Hackett's men grew into the game after a sluggish start. Jordan Archer posed a threat with his pace running into the channels.

His good work in a wide position created the best chance of the half for Connor Gater, who cannoned his strike against the woodwork from the edge of the area.

Converted

The visitors eventually took the lead as Duggan converted from inside the six-yard box just minutes after the interval.

The centre-half brought down Matt Dodds' cross magnificently before finding the bottom corner with great composure.

After soaking up some pressure, the Glassboys became a threat on the counter-attack. Substitute Kayelden Brown twice missed the target before Archer forced a good save from Liam Castle.

The hosts had a couple of late chances but couldn't convert, as Stourbridge head into the match at Wycombe in perfect style.

The Glassboys were beaten by the weather when their game at Hedgesford Town was called off last Thursday due to a frozen Keys Park pitch.

On Boxing Day, the FA Cup heroes were shut-out by top-of-the-table Rushall Olympic at Amblecote.

The Pies' former Stourbridge striker Karl Hawley was sent off after lashing out at the Tom Tonks. Despite being down to 10 men, Rushall held firm.

Young Tigers earn their stripes



Instructor Hopeton Harmitt with his successful squad from Tipton Tigers Martial Arts

NINE young kickboxers from the Black Country have made five years of training pay off by picking up their coveted black belts.

The squad from Tipton Tigers Martial Arts, namely Jasmin Mae, Jack Prosser, Jessica Gwilliams, Travis McTaggart, Holly Eaton, Manesh Kaler, Charlie Rigby and brothers Aaron and Jeevan Chahal, are trained at the Great Bridge martial arts academy by Hopeton Harmitt, a 5th Dan black belt who is affectionately known as 'Coach' to his many students.

Throughout his 20-year career, Coach has trained more than 30 black belts, including national, European and World champions.

He said: "I am so proud of my students, what

a fantastic achievement for them all. Becoming a black belt takes countless hours of hard work and dedication and it's great to see such inspiring and hard-working youngsters."

Mr Harmitt added: "Two of my other students became ECKA Grand Prix Champions. They competed throughout the year against other students within ECKA clubs."

"Beginners classes are held every Tuesday and Thursday and I'd love to see the next generation of champions walking through the doors."

Tipton Tigers Martial Arts is located at 74 New Road, Great Bridge. Call 07810 348146 for more information.

Yeltz draw a blank as run is stretched

HALESOWEN have stretched their winless run to nine games, but will be disappointed to only draw a blank against bottom side Corby.

Yeltz were looking for their first league win in six on Friday night, but had to settle for their second successive goalless draw against a side with just 11 points prior to this encounter.

They will be more concerned, however, with the welfare of defender Louis Ezewe who was stretched off on just 20 minutes with a serious ankle break.

The Yeltz carved out the better chances, Tristan Dunkley shooting wide and then into the side netting in the first half and Kaiman Anderson taking one touch too many when through on goal.

Corby's only chance in this period came when Jordan Crawford got on the end of a Tyler Blake cross but shot over.

The second half was very scrappy, Corby missing a couple of chances, including when John Bateman in the Halesowen goal was forced into his first save.

Lee Chilton went close for Yeltz towards the end, curling a shot just over on 70 minutes and actually having the ball in the net three minutes from time but it was ruled offside.

Yeltz's first blank of the festive period came on Boxing Day, with an uninspiring stalemate against struggling Sutton Coldfield.

In a scrappy first half, home goalkeeper John Bateman kept out an early 25-yard free-kick from Sutton captain Danny O'Callaghan.

The Yeltz were unable to find the breakthrough in a drab second period that continued to lack quality.

Monday's game against Hedgesford Town was called off due to a frozen Keys Park pitch. They are at home to Buxton on Saturday.

DK tunners trot off with festive turkey

ONLY a couple of DK runners took advantage of the poultry on offer before Christmas in Wolverhampton & Bilston AC's annual Turkey Trot, a five-mile race around the streets near their Aldersley Stadium home.

Each finisher was rewarded with a turkey – well a turkey product. Simon Blizzard came home for the blue hoops in 29th in 31.50 and Jacqui Elson-Whitaker took 109th place in 40.44.

It was good to see a former DK athlete, Malcolm Pillar, now representing South West Veterans, taking an age group prize in the MV70 category placing 82nd in a time of 37.14.

★★★

The Chronicle, a Midland News Association Ltd publication, printed by the company at Ketter, Leicestershire, Thursday, January 5, 2017

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